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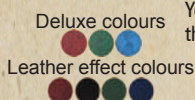


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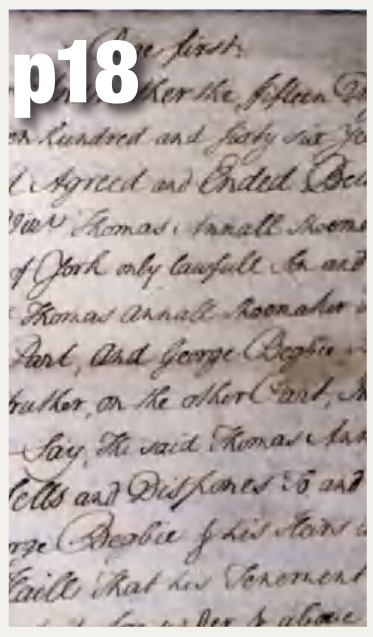
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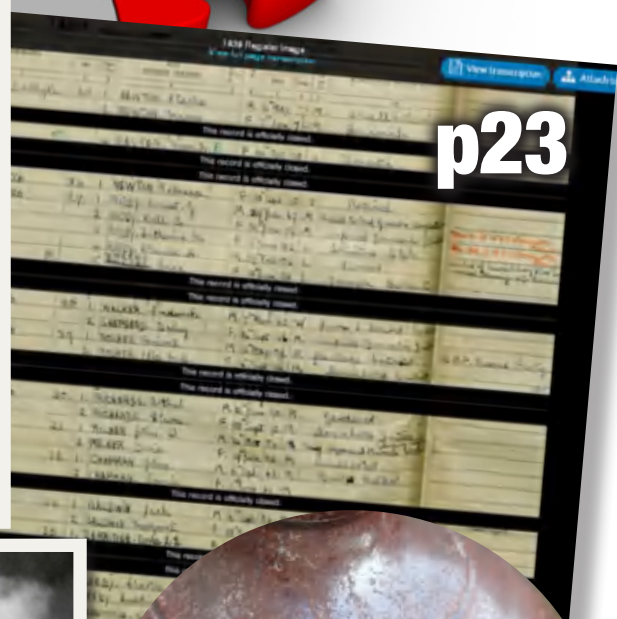
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See how the 1939 Register can help you track down your ancestors in the early days of WW2.

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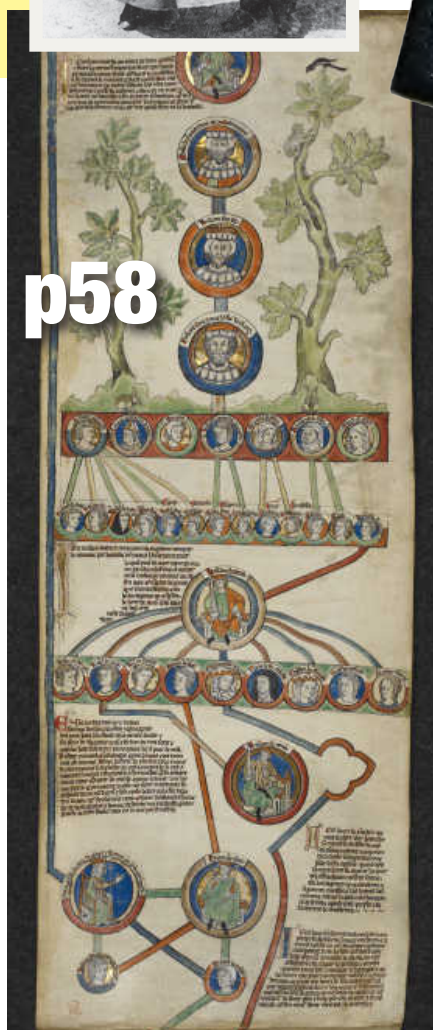
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Welcome

Near the end of another exciting year for family history we look back at the key developments and at the latest addition, the 1939 Register



Well this year is ending in a flourish, with the long-awaited 1939 Register for England and Wales now online. It's been several years since the release of the 1911 Census returns for England, Wales and Scotland, and it will be 2022 before we can tackle the 1921 Census, so online access to this latest national record set has got to be something to be relished. I'll admit that just one of my great-grandparents appears to be in the new database (the others seemingly in Singapore, Ireland and Scotland). However, I have found it extremely interesting to learn about this resource – both how it was created in the early weeks of the Second World War, and the details we can now locate about our ancestors within it. And by weaving our new-found knowledge into our store of past family history discoveries, hopefully we can piece together further clues about our families in the decades before and after 1939.

I hope you've all had a very enjoyable and rewarding year of family history, and wish you good health, happy Christmas and many more genealogy discoveries to come.

Helen

Helen Tovey

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1939 Register now online at Findmypast.co.uk



The eagerly awaited 1939 Register for England and Wales is now online at Findmypast.co.uk, launched in association with The National Archives.

The register offers a fascinating snapshot of the nation on the eve of war, while also providing an excellent census substitute for family historians. Until now, the most recent similar information available was the 1911 Census. Owing to the 100-year rule, the 1921 Census will not be released until 2022, while the 1931 Census was destroyed in the war and the 1941 Census was never taken. The 1939 Register therefore bridges an important 30-year gap in history.

In September 1939, when WW2 had just broken out, 65,000 enumerators were employed to visit every house in England and Wales to take stock of the civil population. The information they recorded was

used to issue identity cards, plan mass evacuations, establish rationing and more. Later, the 1939 Register would play a central role in the establishment of post-war services like the NHS.

Comprising 1.2 million pages in 7,000 volumes and documenting the lives of 41 million people, the 1939 Register of England and Wales includes the names of inhabitants at each address, their date of birth, marital status and occupation.

Paul Nixon, military expert at Findmypast, said: 'The 1939 Register is one of the most important documents of modern British history. It allows us to see where our relatives were living, with whom and what jobs they did at the start of World War II. To help people understand the period better



Find out more about the 1939 Register on pages 23-25 & 26-29!

and to create a picture of our world in 1939, we have added a range of contextual information to bring the records to life. Maps, photographs, newspapers, and infographics will immerse the user in the period and give a flavour of what life was like for our parents or grandparents.'

The 1939 Register is available online only at www.findmypast.co.uk. The register is free to search but there is a charge to view the records with different pay-per-view packages starting at £6.95. Owing to data protection, there will be some closed records at the time of launch.

Findmypast.co.uk includes information on the 1939 Register, the digitisation project, and how to explore the records.

Commemorative events remember Battle of Jutland

A series of centenary events will be held in the Orkney Islands on 31 May 2016 as part of the Government's plans to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Battle of Jutland, which brought together the two most powerful naval forces of the time in the largest sea battle of the First World War.

Secretary of State John Whittingdale said: 'These commemorations will be an opportunity for the country to come together to honour those who lost their lives during the Battle of Jutland. The pivotal role that the Royal Navy played in the war

effort cannot be underestimated and we owe a great debt to those brave souls who gave their lives.'

During the Battle of Jutland, which took place in the North Sea, near Denmark, 6,000 British and 2,500 German personnel were lost. Those on all sides who lost their lives will be honoured during the commemorations, which will also recognise the impact the battle had on the Orkney Islands and the role that Orkney played in hosting the Grand Fleet throughout the war.

- Forces War Records' (forces-war-records.co.uk) latest collection, Military Hospitals Admissions and Discharge Registers WW1, has now reached half a million records.
- The British Newspaper Archive has passed 12.1 million images and now has 535 titles online. See the latest releases at www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/home/LatestAdditions.

● Applications for the 2016 Manchester Community Histories Awards are now open. The awards give recognition to the excellent work being done to celebrate and preserve Greater Manchester's histories and heritage. Visit manchesterhistoriesfestival.org.uk.

● TheGenealogist.co.uk is promising new software, records and interfaces for 2016 – we'll keep you updated!



TV documentary on look out for participants



Cousins who were successfully reunited early this year – Jim and Kate in Scotland.

Documentary 'Family Finders' for BBC One is looking for people who have lost touch with family members and are trying to reconnect with them. Programme makers Ricochet Television would also like to hear from those who have managed to track down family members recently, either independently or with the help of specialist agencies. Each programme will follow the process and detective work used by families and agencies as they hunt for lost relatives, culminating with the moment the two sides are reunited or meet each other for the very first time. If you'd like to get involved, call 01273 224800 or email familyfinders@ricochet.co.uk to share your story.

Suffolk memorial research

Two researchers have been investigating the 1,482 names of soldiers remembered on the First World War



memorial at Christchurch Park, Ipswich, Suffolk.

In October 2014, Helen Ely and Andrew Beal began to research the names from the memorial

using the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), genealogy websites and Google. The pair are now very close to completing profiles for each of the men, which include wives and children, and information on the emblems, regiments and battalions.

Find out more about the project and what has been discovered at www.facebook.com/pages/Ipswich-War-Memorial-Cenotaph/779067228815027. Get in touch with the researchers if you have any information to add or relevant photographs.

New WW1 memorial unveiled in Surrey

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) has unveiled a new memorial at Brookwood Military Cemetery in Surrey.

The Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial is dedicated to the memory of more than 260 First World War servicemen who died in the UK and Ireland, or at sea, but who have no known grave. Many

of the names are of newly recognised war casualties, whose details were omitted from official records produced during, and shortly after, the First World War.

These missing names predominantly relate to soldiers and officers who died of their injuries away from the battlefield.

The cases are presented to the CWGC by families, historians and researchers, but particularly a group of dedicated volunteers who have formed the In From the Cold Project (infromthecold.org). Each case is evaluated and forwarded to the relevant government for a final decision.

Mr Terry Denham, on behalf of the In From the Cold Project, said: 'When the In From the Cold Project was set up in 2006, we didn't appreciate the scale of the task before us, nor did we envisage our work leading to the creation of a new memorial at Brookwood. The project's motto is Sacrifice Remembered and our aim has always been to see these men and women receive their proper recognition. With the building of the new CWGC Brookwood 1914-1918 Memorial, we feel we have ensured this is the case.'

The memorial has been designed so that new names can be added as additional cases are accepted.

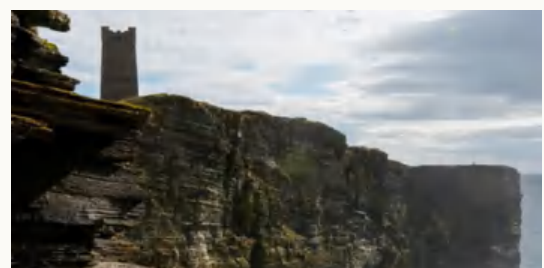


Centenary funds for restoration projects still available

Grants of £190,000 have been made to 21 projects to restore WW1 memorials across Scotland, including the iconic Kitchener memorial in Orkney (pictured).

The grants bring to £528,000 the total amount offered to 67 Scottish war memorials since the scheme was launched in 2013. A pot of £1 million was made available for the centenary, in order for communities to repair and restore their own monuments. Communities can still apply for a share of the funds.

Frances Moreton, director of War Memorials Trust, said: 'The charity is



delighted at the level of interest in this scheme and the enthusiasm of people across the country to do something about the condition of their memorials. There are still plenty of funds available for the right projects so get in touch with us if we can help your local war memorial.'

Visit warmemorials.org.

Free records for FT readers

At *Family Tree* we've teamed up with UK family history website TheGenealogist.co.uk to offer our readers the chance to view selected records free of charge.

This issue's records are the Derbyshire 1901 Census returns.

- 1 Simply register at www.thegenealogist.co.uk/FTFree.
- 2 To activate your

content for this issue, enter the code 003871.

- 3 Once activated, content will be accessible for a 30-day period (within 3 months of the UK on sale date).





● Who Do You Think You Are? Live tickets will be on sale by the end of November at a new-look whodoyouthinkyouarelive.com.

● RootsIreland.ie has a new look and is now mobile-friendly. Indexed transcriptions of parish registers now link to the National Library of Ireland's unindexed images of parish registers, where a corresponding one is available.

Historic churches and chapels share £750,000 heritage funding payout

Churches listed in the Domesday Book, the birthplace of King Richard III and a chapel designed by Capability Brown are among 14 churches sharing in a £750,000 funding payout for urgent repairs.

The WREN FCC Heritage Fund Grants are awarded to historic churches and chapels on the recommendation of the National Churches Trust. Since 2010, the National Churches Trust has safeguarded the future of 54 English churches and chapels by recommending £2.2 million of WREN FCC Heritage Fund Grants

to pay for urgent repairs.

A spokesperson for St Mary and All Saints Church in Fotheringhay, Northamptonshire (pictured), said that its grant of £54,500 came 'just the nick of time to tackle urgent repairs' to the roof, drainage and gutters and external stonework. King Richard III, recently reburied in Leicester Cathedral, was born in the village, and Mary Queen of Scots was executed there.

For more information about WREN's FCC Heritage Fund, or to find out if your project could be eligible to receive a grant in 2016, visit www.wren.org.uk.



MyHeritage searches are now records



MyHeritage.com has unveiled Search Connect, which enables users to find others who are looking for the same ancestors or relatives, and get in touch with them.

Search Connect includes millions of searches made by MyHeritage members. Each search is indexed along with the full metadata (dates, places, relatives and more) included in the user's query. When another user searches for similar information, previous searches are included within the results, along with the means to get in touch with the users who conducted them.

Search Connect is complemented by MyHeritage's new Global Name Translation technology, which allows users to find other people who searched for the

same name in another language.

'MyHeritage specialises in developing innovative technologies for family history discoveries,' said Gilad Japhet, founder and CEO of MyHeritage. 'We are particularly excited about Search Connect because it enables users to benefit from the knowledge of others. When searching for an elusive ancestor who had left no trace behind, Search Connect reveals other people who are searching for the same person, which is the next best thing. We anticipate that many of our users will discover long-lost family members thanks to this unique addition.'

Viewing Search Connect results is free. A MyHeritage subscription is required to contact other users. Users can opt out and turn off the feature if they do not want MyHeritage to record their searches.

WW2 civilian gallantry awards at Ancestry

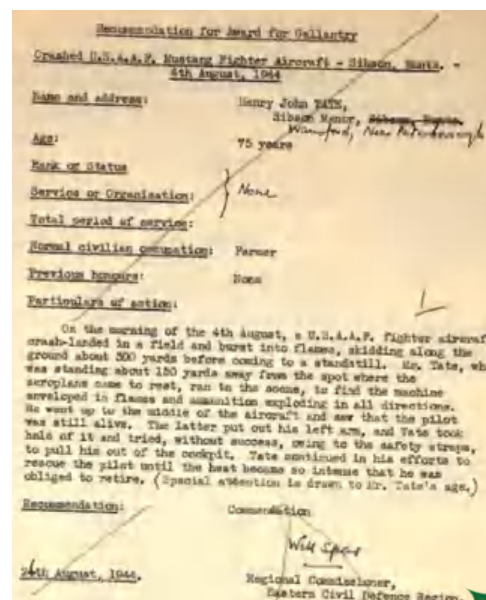
Ancestry.co.uk has added UK, WWII Civil Defence Gallantry Awards, 1940-1949.

During the Second World War, up to 1.9 million men, women, and teens as young as 15 served as Civil Defence Volunteers. They worked as air raid wardens, first aid workers, firewatchers, messengers, in rescue efforts, in rest centres, and emergency feeding programmes. Acts of bravery by civilians, police, and fire were rewarded with a variety of awards and medals.

Ancestry's newly added collection contains digitised copies of evidence

submitted to the Inter-departmental Committee on Civil Defence Gallantry Awards and its recommendations to the Chatfield Committee. The evidence can include the name and age of the person being recommended, the date and details of his or her actions of merit, lists of supporting documentation and possibly copies, who made the recommendation (name or title), tenure, occupation, and the type of award received or denied.


Also new at Ancestry is Surrey, Regimental Rolls, 1914-1947. This collection consists of records from the Queen's Royal West Surrey and East Surrey Regiments. The records for the Queen's Royal West Surrey Regiment include Enlistment Registers and WWII Honours Indexes. Records for the East Surrey Regiment include Enlistment Registers, Transfers In Registers, and Nominal Rolls of Officers.



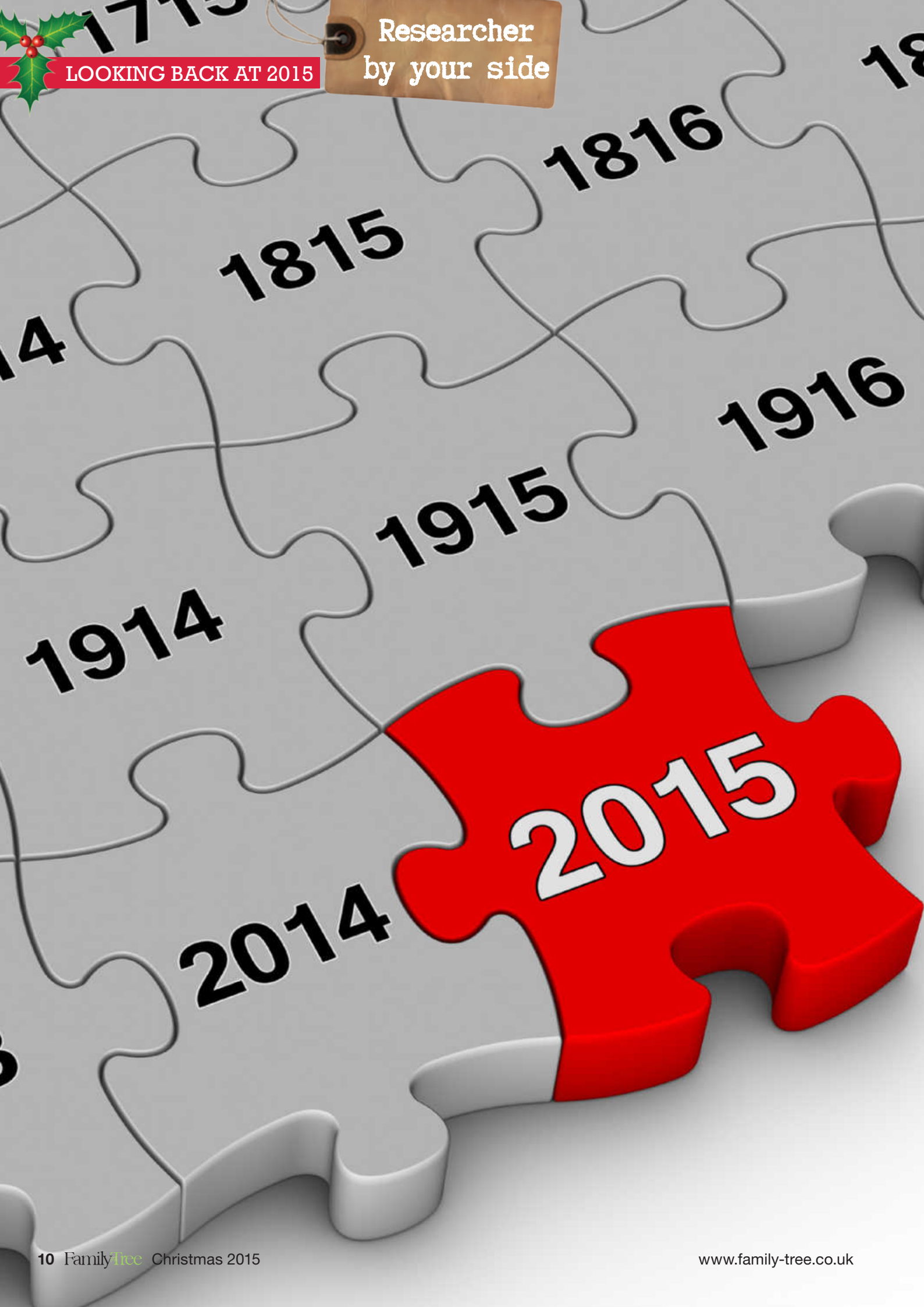
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LOOKING BACK AT 2015

Researcher
by your side



A game-changing year of genealogy

Family historian **Chris Paton** takes a look back at the very best that 2015 had to offer the humble genealogist...

Another year has passed in the genealogy world, with many developments of interest to those of us chasing our ancestors. As we head towards 2016, there is no better time to take a look back at the last 12 months to reflect on the latest records releases online and other developments that have impacted on how we carry out our research.

The biggies

With so many major collections released it is difficult to identify the most significant, but there are two that perhaps for me could be described as 'game changers'. The first was undeniably the digitisation of the 1939 National Identity Register for England and Wales, released in November by Findmypast (www.findmypast.co.uk) in partnership with The National Archives (TNA). Thanks to a quirk of law – that it was not officially classified as a census – it was able to be released before the end of the usual 100-year closure period. This means a major substitute census for the mid-20th century has now been made accessible, which is something to be celebrated!

Although most of my ancestry is Irish and Scottish, I do have some

connections to England in this period, and have found the database surprisingly more agile and useable than I was perhaps expecting it to be. Ironically, Scotland, which was the first to make its equivalent records available online, now has the most expensive service in the UK (see www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/national-register) – but the good news for those with Northern Irish connections is that PRONI (www.proni.gov.uk) has now catalogued its 1939 books by street name, allowing the same records to be easily searched for free via a Freedom of Information Act request. While I have been told that the 1939 records for the Isle of Man have been lost, Findmypast has informed me that records for the Channel Islands exist (though, at the time of writing, I have yet to establish where!).

The other big record release was surely the National Library of Ireland's new Roman Catholic registers service at registers.nli.ie. Almost all but a handful of Irish parishes now have their records digitised and made freely available through the site, but in addition to actually being able to browse through the registers, one of the real joys is

the design of the platform itself. Not only is there an interactive map, but also 'waypointed' records to take you directly to the type of record and year within a register. Having previously accessed many records on microfilm, this is another of those defining moments where a serious amount of pain has been finally removed from the Irish genealogical experience.

Maps, criminals & soldiers

Many other major releases have, of course, taken place this year. TheGenealogist (www.thegenealogist.co.uk) added a substantial amount of English and Welsh tithes maps to its collection, while Findmypast launched an impressive collection in June of English and Welsh criminal records from 1770-1935, as sourced from various TNA-held Home Office registers, as well as a substantial database of British Library-held English electoral registers in October. Ancestry (www.ancestry.co.uk) was equally busy: among its new offerings was the Register of Soldier's Effects from 1901-1929 in January, as sourced from the National Army Museum, and in October, the Scottish-based Calendars of Confirmations and Inventories from





1876-1936, the Caledonian equivalent of its National Probate Calendar for England and Wales. Forces War Records (www.forces-war-records.co.uk) also stepped up its military releases, with a database of British and Commonwealth prisoners of war held in Japan during the Second World War, and a Military Hospitals Admissions and Discharge Registers database from the First World War.

Showstopping successes

In the offline world there have been equally many developments. One of the most significant was the move from London to Birmingham of the annual Who Do You Think You Are Live? Live show. For me this was a resounding triumph because, as a visitor from Scotland, I could now literally walk off the plane at Birmingham Airport and step into the event within five minutes. This year's show was a great event, and I was delighted to hear that for the next few years it will continue to be hosted at the NEC.

Another major event at the start of the year was the official opening of the British Library's new Newspaper Library at Boston Spa in Yorkshire, the end of another major move from the capital. A BBC report at tinyurl.com/p367934 shows how futuristic the site is, and why it must surely be

worth a visit! For those unable to do so, the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk and at Findmypast) continues to place new material online, and has now passed 12 million pages. This is almost a third of the content expected to be available online upon completion, but is still a drop in the ocean compared to what is actually held at Boston Spa.

Legal wrangles

On the legal front, there have been some interesting developments this year. For England and Wales, a proposed change in law at Westminster is potentially paving the way for an online service for birth, marriage and death certificates, similar to the online provisions in Scotland (www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk) and Northern Ireland (<https://geni.nidirect.gov.uk>). While no such service is currently on the cards, this will at least remove any barrier to one being established in the future – a useful first step.

Speaking of General Register Offices (GROs), in the Republic of Ireland, a major upset in 2014 has been finally rectified this year. Having previously launched an online service containing Irish birth, marriage and death indexes up to the present day, without informing the country's Information Commissioner – who duly

ordered them to be removed – the Irish GRO relaunched its service at www.irishgenealogy.ie in April. The new version now has closure periods in place – 50 years for deaths, 75 years for marriages and 100 for births – and the Information Commissioner is happy!

Slightly less delighted, however, are Scotland's genealogists, following news at the end of September that, for privacy reasons, the Scottish Courts and Tribunal Service (www.scotcourts.gov.uk) has now imposed a 100-year closure period on its divorce records. While the indexes for the statutory Register of Divorces, kept from 1984, can still be consulted at the ScotlandsPeople Centre in Edinburgh, the register images

themselves have been removed, until the National Records of Scotland (www.nrscotland.gov.uk) can work through the legal implications of the new ruling.

DNA developments

The world of genetic genealogy continues to grow in popularity, with new products including Ancestry's autosomal DNA testing service at dna.ancestry.co.uk. The world of DNA experienced a few somewhat science-fiction developments this year as well, however, with news in February that DNA might be a viable method by which to store computer data for up to a million years (www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/02/150212154633.htm), while the advent of three-parent babies in the UK is also now well and truly on the horizon (www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-31069173). Not only might that redefine how we think of our families in the future, DNA also looks like it might soon be causing some major upsets in the past among the landed gentry, with challenges to long-held baronetcies that may upset those among us with blue blood (tinyurl.com/oo8axof).

Fond farewells


Advances in DNA research point to the future development of the genealogy industry, but it has also been a year where the pace of change has also taken its toll. While genealogy on television continued to be served by yet another excellent series of BBC One's 'Who Do You Think You Are?' (its 12th), the death in October of former TV presenter Gordon Honeycombe, who pioneered such series in the late 1970s, should definitely not go unnoticed. An example of his enjoyable 'Family History' series is available online at youtu.be/wXh0CSRLdEE.

This was also the year when the pioneering Origins website (www.origins.net) finally went to meet its maker, its data having been recently acquired by Findmypast. With the running of the ScotlandsPeople website due to be taken over by a new company from September 2016, it should be remembered that before it came onto the scene, it was in fact the Scots Origins site, which paved the way. Closer to home, on a personal level, a local family history society, Alloway and Southern Ayrshire, was forced to close earlier this year due

to lack of volunteers. As I write this I am also reading that a branch of the Ontario Genealogical Society in Canada has also just converted itself into an online-based branch only, for similar reasons. Let's hope that the family history society is not becoming an endangered species.

A busy year

Finally, for me, it has been an exceptionally busy and fun year. As well as producing three more books on Irish land records, online Irish genealogy records, and the records of ancestral crisis in Scotland (available from www.my-history.co.uk), I also spoke at genealogy conferences in Portugal, Toronto and Ottawa, and more exotically, on board a cruise ship in July sailing around the Baltic with Unlock the Past (www.unlockthepastcruises.com)! Next year promises to be equally fun, with conferences in Canada and the USA.

Whatever you are doing for Christmas, have a good one – and after the turkey's been devoured, and the wine is drunk, I'll see you on the other side! 

About the author

Chris Paton runs the Scotland's Greatest Story research service (www.scotlandsgreateststory.co.uk), lectures and teaches online courses through www.pharostutors.com. He is the author of *Researching Scottish Family History*, *Tracing Your Family History on the Internet*, *Tracing Your Irish Family History on the Internet* and *The Mount Stewart Murder*, among others, and blogs at www.britishgenes.blogspot.co.uk.





Dear Tom

In this issue:

- A naval occupation
- Baby names
- Baptist records

Explore the serious, sublime and the ridiculous facets of family history in this genealogical miscellany. This issue **Tom Wood** learns some naval slang and new names.

Baby naming trends



Last issue we remarked upon unusual American baby names in 2014, and this time we look at the top 100 first names parents in England and Wales chose for their children when registering their births last year. The report, produced by the Office for National Statistics, revealed Oliver and Amelia were still the most popular first names for baby boys and girls in 2014 – Amelia has been at number one since 2011 (5,327 girls in 2014), and Oliver (6,649 boys) since 2013. Also in the boys' top 10 were Jack, followed by Harry, Jacob, Charlie, Thomas, George, Oscar, James and lastly William (4,134 boys). After Amelia comes Olivia, Isla, Emily, Poppy, Ava, Isabella, Jessica, Lily then Sophie at number 10 (2,905 girls).

No real surprises there, until we get to some of the newcomers to the top 100: new entries for boys include Ellis at 94, Joey at 97 and Jackson at 100, while other big movers upwards are Kian, Teddy, Theodore, Elijah, Albert and Freddie. Not quite so popular as in previous years were Jamie, Ryan, Riley, Kai, Connor, Bobby and Finlay. For baby girls, new entries were Thea at 79, Darcie at 80, Lottie at 84, Harper at 89, Nancy at 90 and Robyn at 100, replacing Niamh, Paige, Skye, Tilly, Isobel and Maddison/Madison.

The report also features an interesting breakdown of names by region, covering the North East, North West, Yorkshire and The Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East, London, South

East, South West and Wales. Jack was the most popular boy's name in the North East, bucking the trend of Oliver elsewhere, with the exception of London, where Muhammad topped the list. Amelia reigned supreme everywhere for girls, except for the South West, where Olivia was the main choice.

Finally, the report mentions some of the trendier names of 2014, with cultural influences such as pop music (for example, the band One Direction) and the 'Game of Thrones' series making their mark. These include Khaleesi, Daenerys, Arya, Sansa and Brienne for girls, and Lannisters, Greyjoys, Starks, Niall, Zayn and Logan for boys. Whatever happened to simple names like Tom? At least they'd be easier to spell when the little mites begin school!

Doing the donkey work

Once more a plea for help has borne fruit, many times over! Back in September I wondered about the occupation of 'donkeyman' – and I think the postman must have thought I'd won the pools from the amount of mail I got! Seriously, though, many thanks to everyone who got in touch to tell me that a 'donkeyman' was a naval term. Indeed, it seems it was a full-time occupation on seagoing ships and for those, like me, who hadn't come across it before, I'll hand you over to Richard Dawson for his great explanation: 'The donkeyman is the senior rating in the engine room of a British registered ship; so called for his attendance on the donkey boiler,

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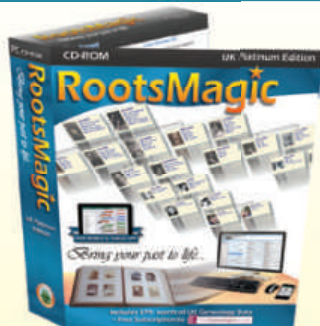
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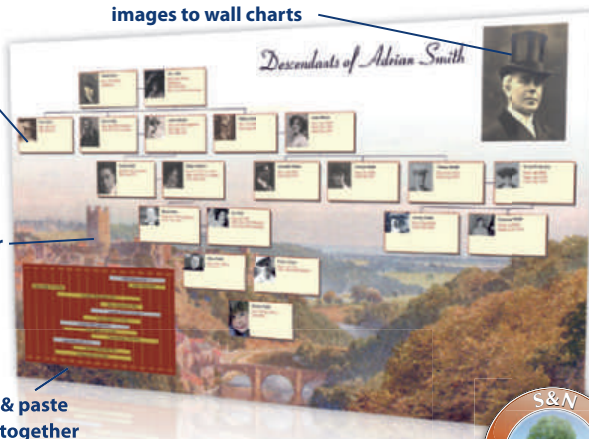
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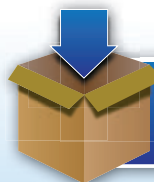
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Dear Tom

which was fired up to provide steam for the cargo winches, pumps and generators when the ship came into port and the main boilers were shut down. The boiler name is analogous to the donkey on a farm, which is a smaller version, of the main power units (horses). In port the donkeyman was foreman, while the firemen (stokers), trimmers (who barrowed coal from the bunkers to the firemen) and greasers were on day work. At sea on ships with three engineers he might take the 8 to 12 watch, while the chief engineer was awake, but relaxing in his room. The boiler has gone but the man still exists.'

Peter Flintham tells me he was an engineer in the Merchant Navy for 40 years, and the donkeyman used to look after the auxiliary engines (cleaning, oiling, greasing) as well as the steering gear greasing. On steam ships he would also be responsible for the donkey – or package – boilers, but the main boilers would be the fireman's job.

Mike Davey points out donkeyman is an example of 'Jack Speak', or Naval slang. Rumour has it, says Mike, that the name donkeyman has its origins in the fact some sailing ships, once in port, did actually use donkeys walking a treadmill as a source of power to drive winches. In Jack Speak, 'donkey work' is used to describe any heavy manual task. Donkey boilers were in regular use in Devonport Dockyard as recently as the 1990s, when steam-powered warships were moored alongside. They looked like ancient traction engines without the driver's cab, and were unable to propel themselves so were dragged alongside the ship by any tractor-like vehicle available. Thus it seemed strange to see a nuclear-powered submarine with a donkey boiler alongside! Mike adds that 'donkey' appears a few times in Jack Speak – a donkey wallop is a cavalry officer and a tailor's donkey is a sewing machine.

My sincere thanks go to everyone

who got in touch about this topic.

Four weddings

My appeal to hear about people who got married more than twice inspired Brian Howes, from Ferryside in Carmarthenshire, to get in touch about a four times-wed Stanley Henry George Harrod (1912-2001), who while not a direct relative, appears on one of his more recent family trees. So we're off to a fine start.

Brian tells me Stanley spent his whole life in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, and it was there each of his four marriages apparently took place. Wedding number one was to Gwendoline May Guymer (born 1919) in 1939 and they had three children before she died in 1963. Stanley then married Doreen Herbert (born 1922) in 1967 and for both of them it was their second marriage. Sadly, it was also short-lived because Doreen died in 1970, and later that same year Stanley married for the third time. This wife was Frances Lilian Rooms (born 1900) and it was her second marriage, which lasted just seven years until 1977, when Frances died. A year later, in 1978, Stanley married for the fourth time, to Joyce Maystone (born 1916). It was Joyce's third marriage and it lasted until she died in 1995.

It must be pretty unusual for an ordinary person to marry four times, especially in the same town, so it will take some beating. My thanks to Brian for passing on these details. I am still interested to hear about other multi-married men and women.

Relationship puzzle

Still vaguely with matrimony, here is a puzzle that Jack R Richards, from Codicote near Hitchin, is hoping someone will answer. He wonders, 'What relation is a woman to the children of her divorced husband's second marriage?', and suggests it might be a 'pre-stepmother'. I doubt there is any named relationship at all but, if you can name one, then drop me a line.

Unlucky 19

Now is 19 an unlucky number? For two of my regular readers' families, it certainly was. First up is Stephen Taylor who tells me the largest family among his ancestors seems to be that

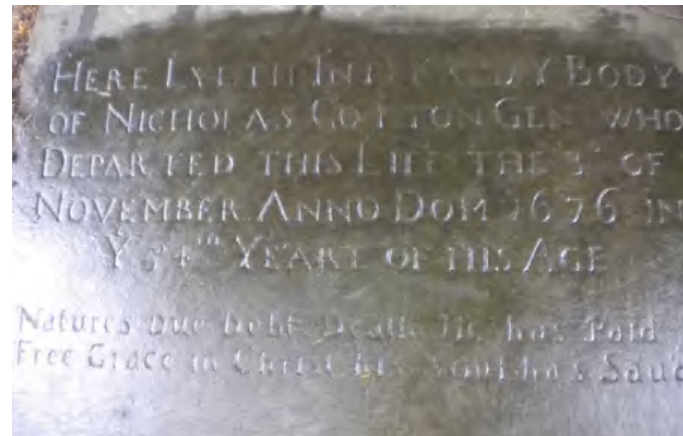
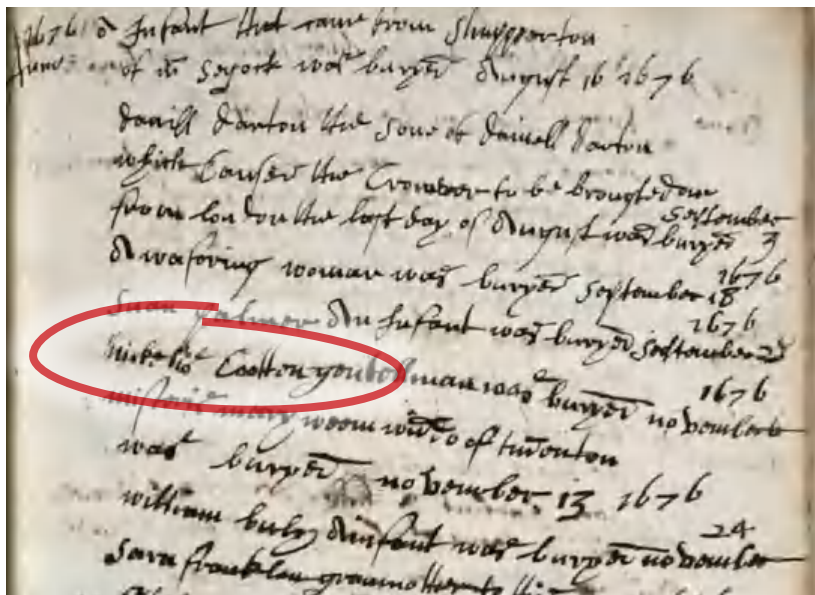
of Frederick Penwill, who married Hannah Jaketta Vavasor in Plymouth in 1889, when she was 18. By the time of the 1911 Census, 22 years later, this couple had apparently had 19 children, of whom only eight were still alive, and just five living with their parents in two rooms in Plymouth. Nineteen seems to have been a wretchedly unlucky number of children for them. I cannot begin to imagine the misery they endured.

But they weren't alone, as Brian Holden has a similar tale to tell about a great-grandmother's family. She was Harriet Turner, born in February 1843 in Wharf Court in Reading. She appears on the 1861 Census, living with a George Long, born in January 1842 at Rushy Platt in Swindon. The couple married in Reading on 20 May 1861 but it was not a tremendously long marriage, as Harriet died giving birth to a stillborn child on 22 June 1880. However, in those 19 years of marriage, Harriet gave birth 19 times, all of which were single births. Of the 19 children, five were stillborn, six died during their first month of life, three passed away before their first birthdays and just five lived into adulthood. Details of the births were in a list handed down from Brian's grandmother, presumably copied from the family Bible. Brian adds: 'Aside from the dreadful sadness in this young couple's lives, Harriet was pregnant for about 19 of her 37 years of life... Her husband George never remarried and lived out his old age with his daughter Alice Maud.' So 19 was a terribly unlucky number for this couple too. Do let me know of other similarly unfortunate large families.

Cotton's gravestone

I'm always pleased to hear about very old headstones in churchyards and Amanda West has come across a beauty found in St Mary's in Sunbury-on-Thames. It dates back to 1676 and its inscription reads: 'Here lyeth interred ye body of Nicholas Cotton, Gent. who departed this life 3rd November Anno Dom 1676 in y 54th yeare of his age. Natures due debt Death he has Paid. Free Grace in Christ his soul has savd.'

Sadly, Amanda tells me, nothing is known of Nicholas Cotton, or his family, other than his rank as a



The 1676 burial register entry for Nicholas Cotton, and the inscription on his headstone.

gentleman and that he was sufficiently wealthy to warrant a grand memorial in a small churchyard. We hope Nicholas may ring a bell somewhere and that someone will be able to supply more information about him. It's certainly one of the oldest memorials I have heard about.

Tracing Baptists

Those of us whose ancestors mostly appear in Church of England baptism registers should be grateful they were not Baptists, as I understand members of the congregation went largely unbaptised – thus unrecorded – until they were adults. However, I was pleased to learn from Helen Claus, whose family became Baptists in 1800, that some Baptists and other Independent Christians may have thanksgiving or dedication services for babies, although no water is involved. Helen also tells me some Baptist churches and chapels kept lists of births of children born to church members, but there was no obligation to do this, so tracing birth dates can be difficult. In a Baptist Church, Helen reminds us, adults are baptised as a sign of their personal faith, and this can happen at any age.

As if to prove this point, Raymond Golds has been in touch to remind me this subject cropped up back in the September issue of *Family Tree* in 2010, when he offered a baptism of a Christopher Leach at Rickmansworth, in Hertfordshire, when in his 91st year. My word, he's got a better memory than I have! And 91 years will still take some beating.

The last word on this comes from Helen, who points out that if a Baptist chapel is closed, the registers may be

lodged with the local record office or with Baptist society archives.

Illegitimacy the norm

I'm winding up with an unusual story about a family that Georgina Hutber discovered while researching her ancestors, who seemed to thrive on illegitimacy! Her maternal grandfather's family were Lomases from the Staffordshire Moorlands, where as she says, illegitimate children seemed to be quite typical. She explains: 'Richard Lomas married Hannah Berisford in 1804 and they had 13 children (12 boys and one girl) between 1804 and 1828. The only girl, Hannah, was born in 1810, and went on to have eight illegitimate children. They were Mary (1832), William (1833), Hannah (1837), Margaret (1838), twins Betty and Liddy (1841), Isaac (1844) and Emma (1847). They were baptised in Sheen and Longnor, and the parish registers clearly show that Hannah was unmarried, except in the case of Emma, who was baptised as the daughter of William and Hannah Lomas. However, it seems this child was also illegitimate – the vicar of Longnor obviously knew what was going on and filled in the register accordingly! In addition, the birth of Margaret was registered by one William Lomas, resident at the same address as Hannah.'

'The William Lomas, in question, was born about 1790, several years after the death of his "father" George Lomas! He married Fanny Ball in 1832, but she died in 1834, aged only 22, after the birth, of her second child, both of whom died in early infancy. By the 1841 Census, Hannah Lomas was living at the same address as William,

with their first six children. William died in 1849, aged 62, and Hannah in 1860, aged 50.'

However the real nugget here, Georgina tells us, is that 'William, was almost certainly Hannah's uncle!'. So how did an uncle and niece get away with producing so many illegitimate children? We'll never know. But if you do want to know more about illegitimacy in the Staffordshire Moorlands, Georgina recommends reading *Incidences and Attitudes: A view of bastardy from eighteenth century rural North Staffordshire c1758-1820* by Patricia Bromfield (*Midland History*, vol 27, issue 1, 2002, pp80-98).

Christmas wishes

Now I must most sincerely thank everyone who has so very kindly written to me via the magazine this year. Without your wonderfully informative correspondence this column would cease to exist. So do please keep your letters coming in the New Year.

It can take more than a matter of weeks to get the details from your correspondence into print, so I must ask for your patience on this score. Finally, it just remains for me to wish everyone a wonderfully happy Christmas and the very best of good fortune and luck in 2016. 🌿

About the author

Tom Wood was a founder member of Lincolnshire Family History Society and its first, award-winning, magazine editor. As well as contributing to *Family Tree* from its early days, Tom also edited the Federation of Family History Societies' magazine and wrote *An Introduction to British Civil Registration*. A member of the SoG and Guild of One-Name Studies, he is still researching the family names, Goldfinch and Shoebridge.

PROBLEM SOLVING FOR FAMILY HISTORIANS

Whether searching just a single website or the entire internet, hunting widely for your ancestors often achieves specific – and very surprising – results, as **David Annal's** discoveries can vouch.

Before the days of online research, there was only one way to approach a family history brickwall. You used to have to plan a trip to a record office to search through a specific document or, as Audrey Collins (my former colleague at The National Archives, TNA) likes to put it, 'go to a place to look at a thing!'.

This is still a perfectly valid approach to problem solving, or indeed to any sort of family history research. You establish that a document or a series of documents is held by a particular record office and you search it, hoping to find references to your ancestors. Of course, increasingly, your search will take place online and it's more a case of identifying which of the various family history websites provides access to the documents that you're interested in. But the principle is the same; it's a focused approach to research and one that frequently yields positive results.

The broad-brush approach

We talked last issue (*FT* December) about using the 'less is more' principle to improve the prospects of tracking down your more elusive ancestors.

With sites such as Ancestry.co.uk, Findmypast.co.uk and

22/9/14

HIS MAJESTY'S *First* Regiment of Foot Guards
whereof *His Royal Highness Prince of Wales* is Colonel.

THESE are to certify, that *Richard Bushby* Sergeant
in *1st Foot Guards* Company in the Regiment aforesaid, born in the
Parish of *Little Brickhill* in or near the Town of *Little Brickhill*
in the County of *Buckingham* was enlisted at the age of *Eighteen*
Years; and hath served in the said Regiment for the space of *Twenty One*
Years and *Ninety Five* Days, as well as in other Corps after the age of Eighteen,
according to the following Statement, but in consequence of *Skirmishes*
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is considered unfit for further Service, and is hereby discharged; having first received all
just Demands of Pay, Clothing, &c. from his entry into the said Regiment to the date
of this Discharge, as appears by the Receipt on the back hereof.

And to prevent any improper use being made of this Discharge by its falling
into other Hands, the following is a Description of the said *Richard Bushby*
He is about *40* Years of Age, is *5* Feet *8* Inches in height,
Dark Hair, *Grey* Eyes, *Brown* Complexion, by Trade a *Saddler*.

STATEMENT OF SERVICE

IN WHAT CORPS.	Period.		Sergeant Major.		Qr. Mast. Sergeant.		Sergeant.		Corporal.		Trumpeter or Drummer.		Private.		Total Service.		In East or West India, included in the foregoing Total.	
	From	To	Yrs.	Days	Yrs.	Days	Yrs.	Days	Yrs.	Days	Yrs.	Days	Yrs.	Days	Yrs.	Days	Years.	Days.
<i>1st Foot Guards</i>	<i>1793</i>	<i>1804</i>					<i>3</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>76</i>			<i>13</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>95</i>		
TOTAL...																		

Given under my Hand and Seal of the Regiment, at *Whitehall* on the
Day of *September* 18 *14*

J. M. B. R. C.
Comd. 1st Foot Guards

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Benefits of the broad-brush approach

TheGenealogist.co.uk offering blanket searches of all their resources, you can use the same principle to find records of your ancestors in the most unexpected places.

The likelihood of turning up relevant hits depends to some degree on how common the name is that you're looking for but it's definitely a strategy that's worth considering. Many years ago, while searching for information about a distant relative of mine, I turned up something wholly unexpected.

William Annal was born in Gravesend in 1823, the son of an Orcadian sailor. William is absent from most of the 19th-century censuses (he was somewhere out on the high seas, far from the prying eyes of the census officials) but from the returns for his family, we can tell that he lived most of his life (while on shore) in Greenwich, where he eventually died in 1905.

He spent more than 40 years of his life as a merchant seaman and would undoubtedly have had some colourful tales to tell about his experiences in distant parts of the globe. With a bit of effort we could reconstruct some of his voyages (as least as far as the dates and destinations are concerned) and we could piece together a fairly comprehensive story of his life.

But thanks to a general search on Ancestry I now know that William had a rather surprising interlude in

his life. In late 1863, at the height of the American Civil War, he found himself in Boston and on 1 December 1863, he enlisted in the Massachusetts 56th Infantry Regiment. His service was rather short-lived; he deserted from the regiment on 28 January 1864 without seeing active service and quickly returned to his life at sea.

While this is clearly not a case of problem solving, it serves to illustrate the point that you just don't know where you ancestors are going to turn up and that these broad searches of the major family history databases are well worth a try. Remember as well, that the websites are constantly adding new material so if you haven't carried out this sort of search for a few months, it's worth trying again now.

How to search Discovery

And it doesn't just apply to the major commercial databases. TNA's Discovery catalogue (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) provides another excellent example of the benefits of this 'scattergun' approach to research. Discovery now includes descriptions of a staggering 32 million records, over 9 million of which can be downloaded as digital images.

Of course it's names that drive our research and we have to develop an understanding of how The National Archives' catalogue was compiled. Discovery is the result of years of cataloguing and indexing

by TNA staff and volunteers. Much of it consists of descriptions of documents; effectively, the old paper lists compiled by TNA in its Public Record Office days and later keyed into PROCAT, the original version of Discovery. You wouldn't expect these descriptions to include names, other than where the file relates to a specific individual. Of little use to us as family historians are those series of documents that are described by the range of names that the individual volumes include. Unless your ancestor happens to be the first or last in the volume you're not going to pick them up. You're more likely to have success with these records using a more traditional, focused search.

You also need to understand that the Discovery search engine doesn't work like those operated by the main commercial sites. Even using the 'Advanced search' you have a very limited number of options: you can search for individual words or an 'exact word or phrase'. If you're searching for a name you need to bear in mind that they can appear in a number of different formats, for example:

John Smith
Smith, John
Smith, J

Dates of birth (if you know them) can be a very powerful tool for this sort of search but again, they may appear in a number of different





formats, depending on how the original list was compiled. If you search for '25 August 1927' and the document lists your ancestor's date of birth as 25/08/1927 your search will be unsuccessful.

Nevertheless, despite these provisos, Discovery is an enormously useful problem-solving tool.

In addition to the holdings of TNA itself, Discovery also provides access to descriptions

of records held by more than 2,500 archives around the UK. As a tool for the 'scattergun' approach to problem solving, Discovery knows no rivals.

Working with Google

Or perhaps it does; in many ways our ultimate weapon is our old friend Google (or for that matter, your major search engine of choice). Offering the simplest and easiest to use search function, a search engine is the nearest thing we have to an index to the internet. And since genealogy is one of the internet's most popular pursuits, it enables us to search millions of websites in one go. Controlling your

Case Study #1

Mary Bushby married Samuel Tuffen (or Tuffin) on 15 March 1825 at the parish church of St Mary, Islington. Fortunately (for our purposes) Samuel died in 1846 and Mary remarried. This second marriage, taking place after 1837, gives her father's name: Richard Bushby, a soldier.

The Army service record of a Richard Bushby who was born around 1774 in Little Brickhill, Buckinghamshire and served in the First Regiment of Foot Guards (the Grenadier Guards) for 21 years before being discharged in 1814, seemed like a good fit but there was nothing to provide definitive proof that this was our Richard. Crucially, there was no sign of a record of death or burial for him.

A bit of digging at The National Archives turned up some Army pension records, which provided a vital clue. References were found to Richard receiving his pension in Barbados between 1825 and 1831.

And this is where a broad search of The National Archives Discovery catalogue paid dividends. Entering 'Richard Bushby' 'Barbados' in the search box returned two highly promising documents from the Colonial Office dating from 1825 and 1826.

CO 28/98/38, dating from 15 December 1826, has the following description: confirms that Mr Richard Bushby, reporter of vessels, will in future remit £50 per quarter to his family in England.

While for CO 28/99, also dating from

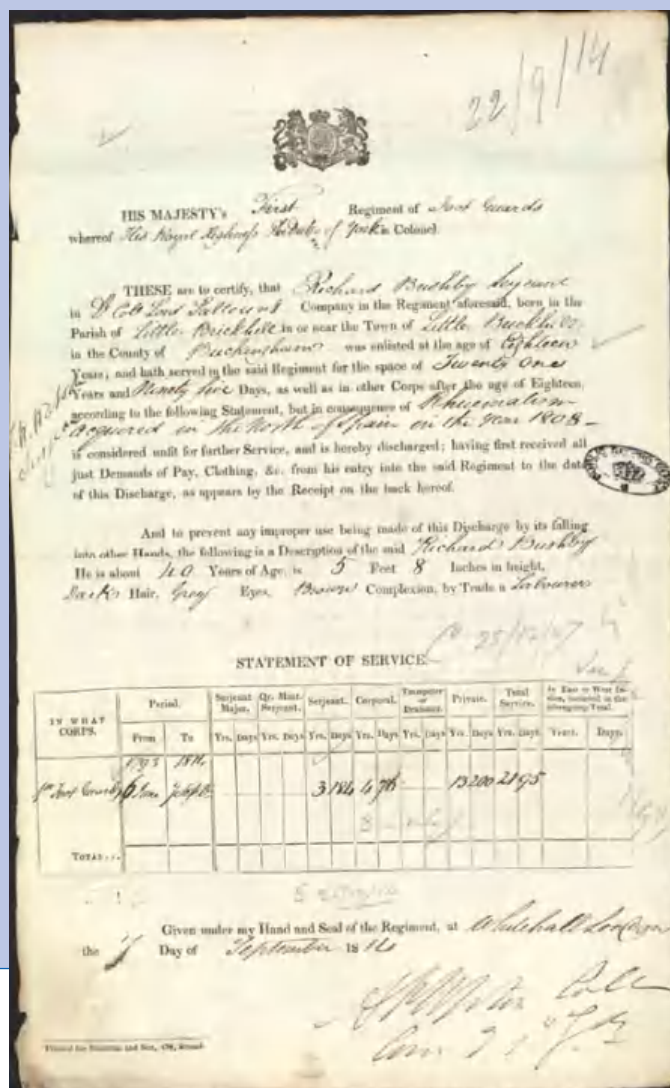
1826, we have: Robert Oldershaw, clerk to the Trustees, Islington (enquiring about Richard Bushby, believed to be employed in Barbados, whose wife and children are receiving parish relief).

The reference to Islington seemed to suggest that we might be on the right tracks as far as a link to the Mary who married there in 1825 was concerned and both appeared to be of interest. The documents themselves proved to be conclusive regarding the link and also were packed full of the sort of human interest that you rarely get from records held by Government departments.

The files comprise a number of separate documents: firstly the letter referred to in the above abstract from the Islington Poor Law authorities but also, a letter from Richard himself (dated, Barbados 20 April 1826) addressed to 'My Dear Wife...' in which he

refers to his appointment to 'a comfortable situation at Barbados' as 'Reporter of Vessels' which he says is 'as good as £200 a year'. Richard goes on to say that 'it will be in my power to send you £80 a year' and then turns to more personal family matters: *I Rec'd your letter giving me the unpleasant*

Richard Bushby's discharge certificate gave promising clues as to his identity, but further sources were needed to establish that David really had identified the right man.






search is perhaps the biggest challenge you'll face. Getting lots of hits is usually quite easy; the skill is in using exactly the right words to deliver relevant results.

You'd be surprised how often a simple combination of your ancestor's surname and the parish that they were associated with can turn up trumps. Again, it helps if the name isn't that common and the place is quite small – my own

Search specific
Use search engine millionshort.com to search the web and find more esoteric search results. You can opt to remove the first results in the listings – for example, removing the first 100 results listed, up to the first million results listed.

brickwall with a family called Port who came from London provides a particularly tough challenge! However, a few additional words to restrict the number of hits can often do the trick. And don't forget the power of putting a word or series of words in inverted commas. 'John Smith' is a far more powerful search term than John Smith – although I wouldn't personally recommend trying either!

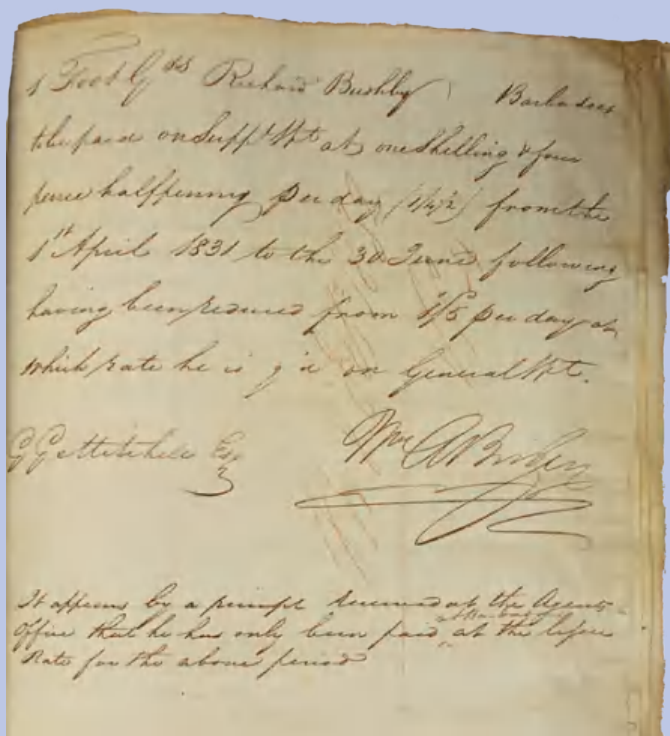
In some respects, this approach to research isn't all that new. In the old days, record offices and libraries weren't complete without a wall taken up with wooden filing cabinets, their drawers full of index cards containing references to names found in specific documents. They may not have been quite as sophisticated or as effective as an online catalogue but they did the same job, and every family historian of a certain vintage will be able to tell you about the index card that helped them to get around their own brickwall.

Now that the job's so much easier; what are you waiting for? 

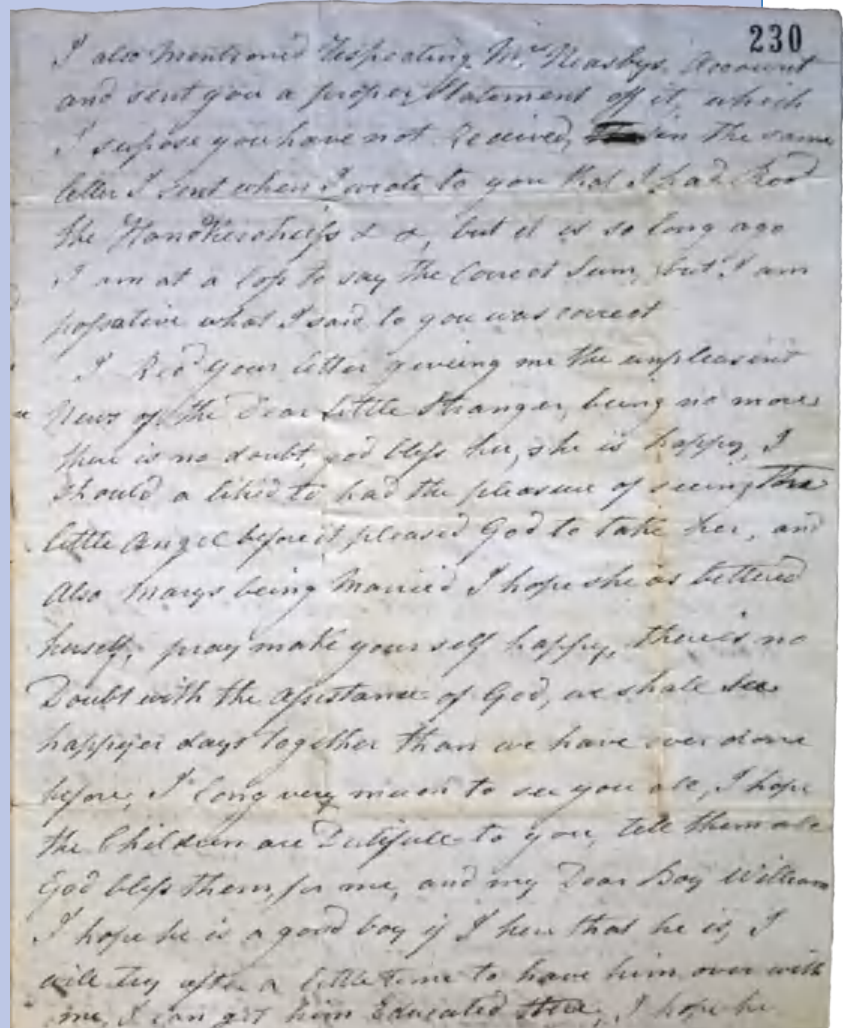


News of the Dear Little Stranger, being no more there is no doubt, god bless her, that she is happy, I should a liked to had the pleasure of seeing the Little Angel before it pleased God to take her, and also Marys being Married I hope she as bettered herself...

The last sentence undoubtedly refers to Mary's marriage to Samuel Tuffin, which had taken place in 1825, and proves beyond doubt that this is indeed the right Richard Bushby.



David found vital clues in TNA's Army pension records mentioning Richard receiving a pension in Barbados between 1825 and 1831. These made it clear he was the man David was searching for.



In this instance, records held in the Colonial Office collections at TNA surprisingly included personal family letters, between husband and wife.





Case Study #2

Thomas Annal (or Annall) is the ancestor of a large group of Annals who lived in Yorkshire from the middle of the 18th century. The earliest sighting of the family in Yorkshire is the marriage of Thomas to Isabel Bridgwater on 12 November 1741 in the North Riding parish of Well. The entry in the parish registers refers to the groom as 'Thomas Annal from North Brittain' – a term used (in an attempt to squash nationalist feelings) to refer to Scotland.

This wasn't a great surprise as both branches of the family are Scottish (one from Fife, my own from Orkney) and a search of the relevant records quickly turned up a suitable candidate: the baptism of a Thomas Annall in the Fife parish of Anstruther Easter in 1715, the son of Thomas and Elisabeth Annall. There was nothing to say that this couldn't be our Thomas but equally nothing to say that it definitely was.

This therefore remained no more than a theory for several years until one day I tried a Google search: 'Thomas Annall' 'Well'. One of the first hits I came up with referred me to a collection of Sheriff Court Deeds, which had been indexed by the Fife Family History Society. The documents are held by the National Records of Scotland and the relevant deed contains the following words:

'It is Contracted Agreed and Ended Betwixt the Partys following: Vizt. Thomas Annall Shoemaker in Well in the County of York only lawfull Son and Heir now on life to the deceast Thomas Annall Shoemaker in Easter Anstruther...'

Absolute proof that the Thomas who settled in Yorkshire was the son of the man from Easter Anstruther.

Simply searching Google, David stumbled on some invaluable indexes that led him to a Sheriff Court Deed held by the National Records of Scotland, which proved that he had identified his ancestor Thomas correctly. For further information about Sheriff Court deeds see the online guide at www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/guides/sheriff-court-records.

A Copy of the Register of Well-parish for part of 1741 & 1742.

Elizabeth daut of Thomas Annall of Well, Lincolns bapt. June 15th.
 Anne Lobson of Well Widow buried July the 9th 1741.
 John Gypin of Well Labourer buried August the 6th.
 Anne daughter of Mr. Wallhead of Snape Weaver bapt. Aug. 16th.
 George son of Matthew Hopton bapt. 27th.
 Ganner buried September 27th.
 John son of John Wallhead of Well Farmer bapt. Octob. 21st.
 James eldest of Snape Labourer buried Octob. 22nd.
 Thomas Annall from North Brittain, & Isabel Bridgwater of Well Maid bapt. Octob. 12th.
 John son of John Thompson of Snape Farmer bapt. Nov. 13th.
 John son of William Gidley of Snape Labourer bapt. Dec. 3rd.
 William son of Thomas Hopton of Well butcher buried January 1st.
 Mary daughter of Henry Hopton of Snape buried January 21st.
 Abraham Hopton of Well Farmer buried January 25th.
 John son of John Chapman of Well Carpenter bapt. Jan. 28th.
 Eliz. wife of Francis Shotton of Well Farmer buried Feb. 28th.
 Richard Hicklin of Well Taylor buried February 10th.
 Francis Shotton of Well Farmer buried February the 29th.
 Thomas Shotton of Well Farmer buried March 1st.
 Paul Wetherald of Snape Farmer buried March 6th.
 Richard son of Simon Johnson of Well buried March 7th.
 Sarah Todd of Well Spinster buried March the 18th.

John Binks of Well Farmer buried March the 19th.
 George Todd of Well Brick-maker buried March the 21st.
 Mary daughter of Richard Brochel of Lodge Farmer bapt. March 25th 1742.
 John son of Michael Ganger near Well Farmer bapt. March 28th.
 Catherine Gerlish of Well Widow buried March 28th.
 Ellen wife of John Buck of Well buried April 2nd.
 Eliz. daughter of Richard Hall of Snape Labourer bapt. Apr. 11th.
 William son of Jonathan Myers of Well Shoemaker buried April the 11th.
 Annaduke Haringwell of Well Snare Weaver buried April 16th.
 Dorothy daughter of John Millbank Esq. of Thornthorpe buried April the 17th.
 Elizabeth Todd of Well Widow buried April 21st.
 Simon Wraether of Beggars Butch in the parish of Kirkby-Allard and Jane Fleeming of Well married by Licence May the 4th.
 Anne wife of Thomas Cook of Snape bapt. May 11th.
 Thomas son of Rich. Wetherald of Snape Weaver bapt. May 15th.
 John Raynoldson
 George Heslop

*Richard Thistlethwaite
Vicar of Well.*



Page first

At Mister Anstruther the fifteen Day of July one thousand seven hundred and sixty six years. It is Contracted Agreed and Ended Betwixt the Partys following. Vizt. Thomas Annall Shoemaker in Well in the County of York only lawfull Son and Heir now on life to the deceast Thomas Annall Shoemaker in Easter Anstruther on the one Part, And George Begbie Shoemaker in Easter Anstruther, on the other Part, In manner following That is to Say, The said Thomas Annall by these presents Sells and Disposes to and in favours of the said George Begbie of his Heirs and Assigns, All and Haill that his Tenement of Land high and low lieth & above with the per-

For years David Annal's earliest proven sighting of his Annal ancestors was the 1741 entry showing the marriage of Thomas Annal to Isabel Bridgwater.

About the author

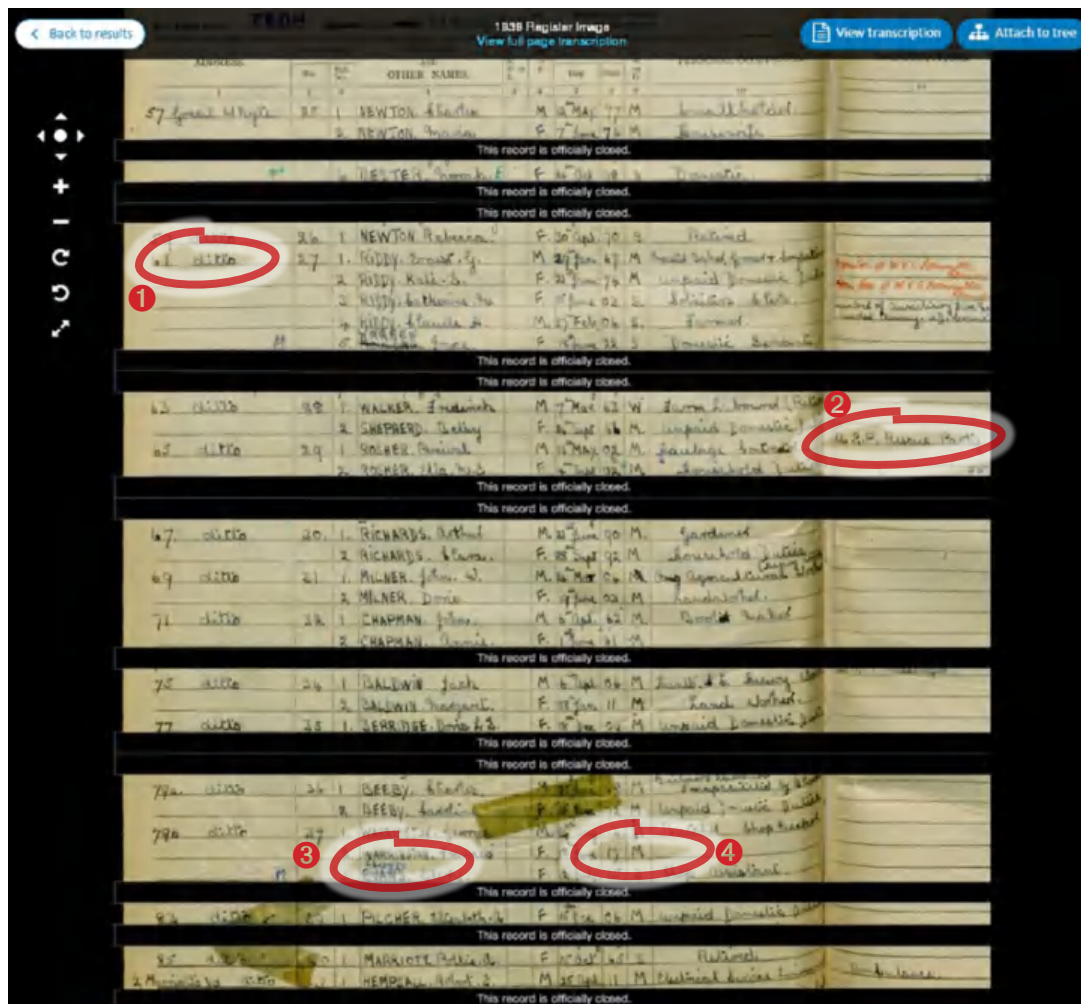
David Annal has been involved in the family history world for more than 30 years and is a former principal family history specialist at The National Archives. He is an experienced lecturer and the author of a number of best-selling family history books, including *Easy Family History* and (with Peter Christian) *Census: The Family Historian's Guide*. David now runs his own family history research business, Lifelines Research.





Searching the 1939 Register

With the digitisation of the 1939 Register for England and Wales by Findmypast, in association with The National Archives, we can now search online for our ancestors at the start of World War II. Learn about their lives at this crucial point in history and see how to get the most from your searches with **Helen Tovey**.



1 Just one of the 1.2 million scanned full colour 1939 Register pages for England and Wales. As with a census enumerator's summary book, on the register you can see your ancestors' neighbours. This page includes the inhabitants of 61 Great Whyte, Ramsey – now home of *Family Tree*!

2 Details listed are: address, name, date of birth, gender, marital status, occupation, changes of name, whether a person was a member of the Armed Forces or reserves, with appointments such as ARP warden included. People who already were serving in the Armed Forces are not included in the register.

3 The 1939 Register was a 'living' document, used by the NHS up until the early 1990s – so changes of name are often recorded. Babies born after the 1939 Register was taken were added to subsequent register books as identity cards continued to be issued until 1952. If you were born prior to 1952 your ID card number would have also been your NHS number.

4 As the register was updated until 1991, then the details of those who died prior to that, but who were born within the past 100 years, are usually visible. Anyone born more than a century ago will also have their details published. If your ancestor was born within the last 100 years but died after 1991 then their details will usually be currently blanked out.

Evacuees, rationing, air raids and blitzed cities are just some of the key images that come to mind when we think of Britain in the Second World War – and it was to prepare for these wartime eventualities that the 1939 Register was originally taken. Recording each person in the UK and Northern Ireland, this massive bureaucratic

undertaking aimed to ensure that the population was identified, fed, housed safely and mobilised. It is the records of 28 million of the 41 million people living in England and Wales at the time that we can currently search at online Findmypast or at The National Archives (TNA), Kew.

The National Registration Act was passed as an emergency measure on 5





QUITE A CENSUS SUBSTITUTE

Foster Household
Dalton-in-Furness U.D., Lancashire, England

	FIRST NAME(S)	LAST NAME(S)	BIRTH YEAR
Person 1	Robert	Foster	1868

Mary A Foster and 1 more person are on this record

[Update the record](#)

Besides finding ancestors, the register can help you to discover who lived, or was staying in, your house in 1939.

In addition, if you know the address that your ancestor was living at, the address search can provide useful information to help you pinpoint your ancestors from among the search results listings.

60 result(s)

House name	Street	Borough / District	County	Country	
46	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
47	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
48	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
49	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
50	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
51	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
52	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
53	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
54	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
55A	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
55B	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
56	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
57	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
59	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
60	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview
61	Great Whyte	Ramsay U.D.	Huntingdonshire	England	Preview

Riddy Household
Ramsay U.D., Huntingdonshire, England

	FIRST NAME(S)	LAST NAME(S)	BIRTH YEAR
Person 1	Ernest G	Riddy	1867

Kate E Riddy and 3 more people are on this record

2 more people who are officially closed

[Unlock the full Riddy household](#)

The most comprehensive record set ever released, only online at Findmypast. Available in 1, 5 or 15 household bundles.

[Unlock this household](#)

For instance, these are the details (left) obtained at the preview stage of a person search.

However, if you search by address, then click through to preview, you then reach the same preview screen, and can so cross-refer the address (above) and your ancestor's name.

September 1939 – two days after the outbreak of war. During the week ending Friday 29 September 1939 the enumerators handed out the registration forms, then by Monday 2 October everyone had been issued with an identity card and the enumerators had compiled the household schedules into their

register books. These record the name, address and occupation for each person – and their date of birth (invaluable for locating someone with a common name).

If your ancestor was born within the last 100 years but died after 1991 then their

details will be currently blanked out. As time passes, the details of further ancestors will become available to view, once 100 years and a day have passed since their date of birth. If you have proof of death (eg a death certificate)

WHO: First name(s) Last name(s)

BIRTH YEAR: Give or take

BIRTHDAY: DD MM

PLACE KEYWORDS:

SEX: Browse Sex

OCCUPATION:

MARITAL STATUS: Browse Marital status

STREET:

BOROUGH / DISTRICT: Browse Borough / District

COUNTY: Browse County

COUNTRY: Browse Country

OTHER HOUSEHOLD MEMBER: Other household member's first name(s) Other household member's last name(s)

Place number Item number

[Search 1939 Register](#)

Left: You can search the database by The National Archives piece number.

Eastwood Household
Leicester C.B., Leicestershire, England

	FIRST NAME(S)	LAST NAME(S)	BIRTH YEAR
Person 1	Alan J	Eastwood	1895

1 more person on this record

Ref: RG101/6027C/219/13

[Update the record](#)

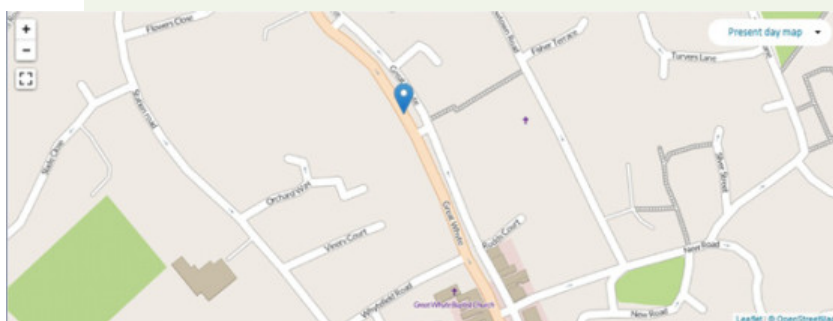
The piece numbers had also been displayed on preview results, allowing you to cross-refer details, and so help ensure you spent your credits that bit more accurately. However, at the time of going to print they were no longer displayed at the preview results stage.



1939 Register credits

- 60 credits cost £6.95 (1 household costs 60 credits);
 - 300 credits £24.95 (£4.99 per household);
 - 900 credits £54.95 (£3.66 per household).
- Credits are valid for 90 days. Subscribers to Findmypast are eligible for a 25 per cent discount on a 300-credit bundle.

In addition to the household transcription and image of the original register page on payment of your 60 credits, you can also access newspaper coverage, vintage photographs from the *Trinity Mirror* collection and maps dating from the turn of the last century, mid-20th-century and the present-day. Unlocking a household also provides access to demographic information covering household sizes, common occupations and more.



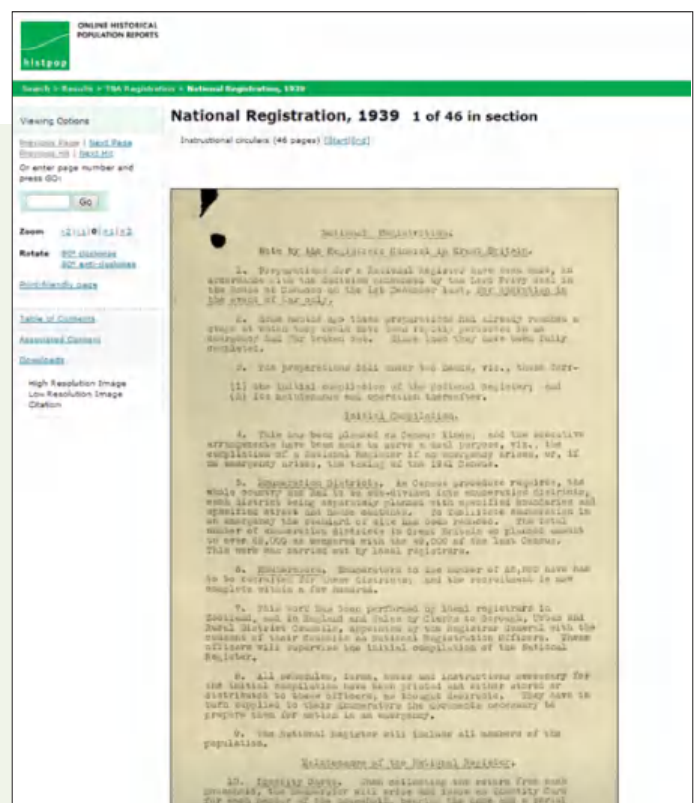
and would like to request that a record be made public sooner, this is possible. Findmypast subscribers contact the website; non-subscribers need to apply via The National Archives under the Freedom of Information Act and pay a £25 fee. It is also possible to view your own registration details – applications can be made using the form found at discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PaidSearch/DSA1939Register and on payment of a £10 fee.

To search the register go to Findmypast.co.uk (free to search, with pay-per-view credits to view transcriptions and images), or visit The National Archives where the digitised collection is free to use. While the news that the 1939 Register database was not to be included as part of the Findmypast subscription has been met with disappointment, the details in the 1939 Register do provide a new research avenue online, particularly as it will be another six or seven years before we will be able to access the next available census (the 1921 for England, Wales and Scotland). It is thanks to the efforts of Guy Etchells and Steven Smyrl (www.cigo.ie) in their Freedom of Information campaign to enable

public access to the 1939 Register, that we are able to view these records at all. To see how you can use the register to complement your research, turn to

page 26. We would be very interested to hear about your searches of the 1939 Register. Please email Helen.t@family-tree.co.uk.

Find the notes by the Registrars General on National Registration on the histpop.org website at (tinyurl.com/obmoky3). The House of Commons had agreed the preparation of the register by the end of 1938 and 65,000 enumerators were recruited to enable speedy registration (49,000 enumerators had been used for the 1931 Census).



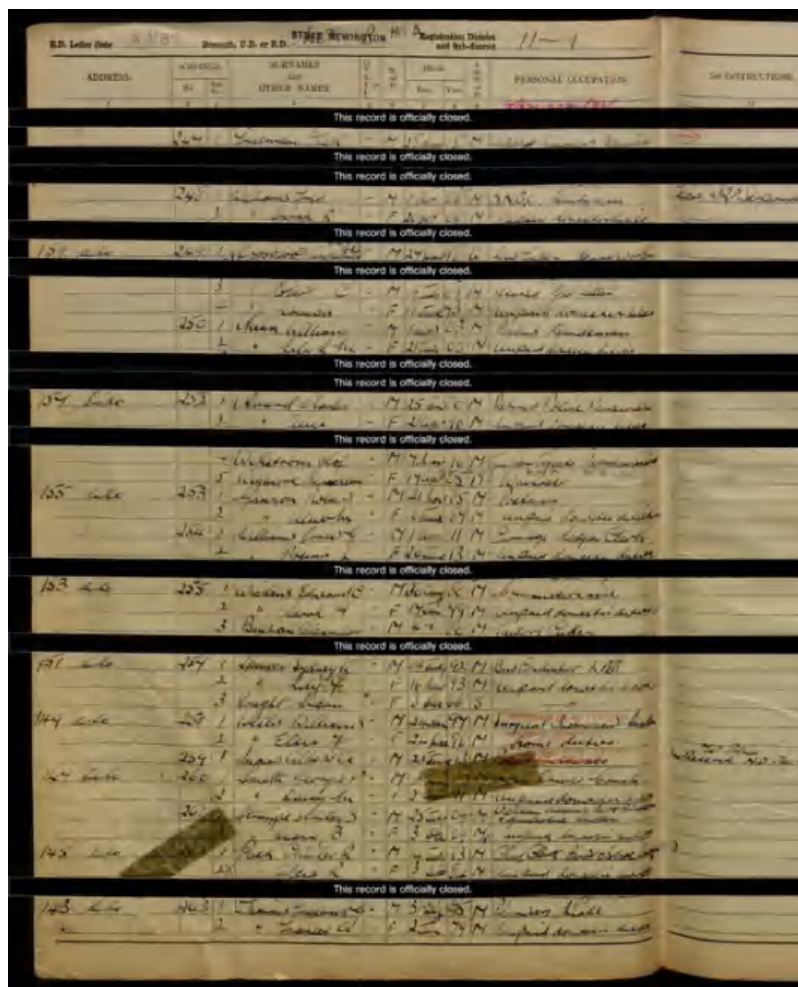


I've found my ancestors in the 1939 Register: What do I do now?

Following the online launch of the 1939 Register, **Emma Jolly** explains how to make the most of your discoveries by using them as a starting point for further research into the lives of your mid-20th century ancestors.

Within weeks of the start of World War II, the Government had undertaken the 1939 Register – in anticipation of the conflict and chaos that was to ensue.





1939 Register showing the Spencer family – Emma's great-grandparents and 2x great-grandmother – at 151 Dynevor Road, Stoke Newington, London N16.

6 June 1941. My great-grandparents' home in Dynevor Road no longer exists but using the contemporary map provided by Findmypast, I can compare the streets with those mapped on Bombsight www.bombsight.org/explore/greater-london/hackney/stoke-newington-central. Local and national newspapers did not always detail air raids for reasons of propaganda and maintaining morale. Nevertheless, they are always worth searching with the names of streets, family members or neighbours that you have found in the 1939 Register.

Investigating an institution

Not everyone was at home on registration night. If your relative was in an institution such as an asylum, workhouse, prison or hospital, you should find their full details in the register, however. Using the address of the institution, you can check with the local archive, The National Archives (TNA) or on Hosprec www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/hospitalrecords, or search The Workhouse workhouses.org.uk and Children's Homes websites www.childrenshomes.org.uk for further details and to help locate more detailed records.

Cross-referring your details

You can also use the address to correlate with residence details on the English and Welsh Probate Calendar (indexed on Ancestry) to find dates of death. The address could also help to pinpoint a county or region of death, which is useful for identifying death certificates and likely places of burial (search DeceasedOnline.com for

Like many people, I was eager to explore the English and Welsh 1939 Register on Findmypast.co.uk on its official launch day. As we have already seen on pages 23-25, the facts revealed in the register include names, addresses, dates of birth, marital status, occupations, and civilian war roles as of Friday 29 September 1939. Within all of this information are clues that can provide invaluable details about the relative being researched. Findmypast.co.uk offers some useful follow-up material, too, including interactive historical maps of the area, local contemporary photographs and a 'Life in 1939' feature.

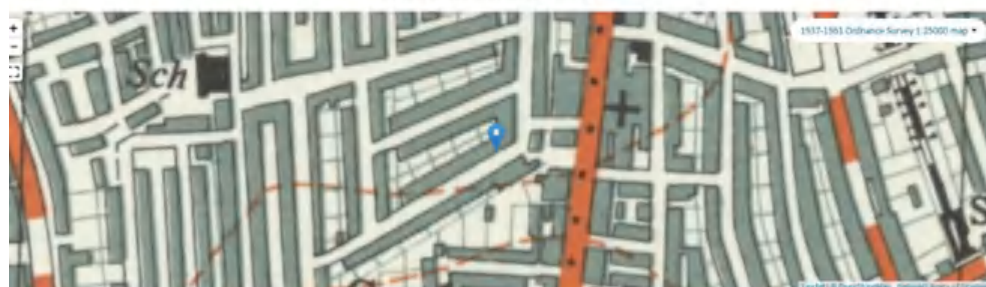
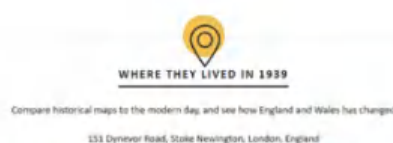
Exploring the neighbourhood

Local maps dating from 1939, or just before, have a number of uses, such as helping to locate an address of interest, besides giving an insight into the locality at the time. They also deepen our understanding of a relative's immediate surroundings. To take your research further, find

more detailed maps at the relevant local record office or on the National Library of Scotland's Map website, maps.nls.uk. Contrasting a pre-war with a post-war map can indicate some of the changes that took place in the area, particularly as a consequence of bombing air raids.

If you have found family living in London, check the Bombsight website to see whether their address or neighbouring properties were hit during the Blitz of 7 October 1940 to

One of the maps on Findmypast showing 151 Dynevor in the Stoke Newington area.





cemetery or cremation records).

Comparing details with electoral registers (recently released on Findmypast, but also available elsewhere, see *FT* December) can help to identify how long a family was resident at a given address.

Married names

One of the genealogical gems on the register is that of married names which have been added after registration night in 1939. As the records remained with the NHS up until 1991, changes of names between 1939 and 1991 are included.

The 1939 Register entry for the author Enid Blyton shows that, in 1939, she was still married to her first husband, Hugh Pollock. She would divorce Pollock and marry Kenneth Darrell Waters in 1943. Here the index shows 'Enid M Waters', her later married name, with 'Pollock' in brackets. As Enid was already married in 1939, her maiden name does not feature. Using both surnames given in the index should enable you to find a marriage in the relevant General Register Office (GRO) marriage indexes.

Working lives

Although the occupation column should be straightforward, there are questions over the accuracy of information given. One question arises over the commonly-used phrase, 'unpaid domestic duties'. It is worth checking with any living relatives

Preview (below) of the 1939 index entry for author Enid Blyton under the surname Pollock, that of her first husband.

whether the person concerned did indeed undertake no paid work. Women's occupations are commonly excluded from formal records of the 19th and early 20th centuries, particularly those of married women, but this does not mean they only worked at home.

Date of birth

Unlike the censuses, the register requested a date of birth rather than an age. As some individuals were confused by this and others deliberately gave a false date, it is sensible to approach this date with caution and try to confirm with another record – ideally a birth certificate. Where you have established that dates of birth are correct, you can use them to check for deaths in the GRO indexes from 1 April 1969. Other searches using dates of birth can be made of school registers on Ancestry and Findmypast. They can also be used to identify a likely quarter for birth registration or to locate a potential baptism record for those with common names.

Blanked records

Of the 41 million records available, approximately 13 million are currently closed. However, some of these can be opened. One of my great-uncles died in 1942, but seemingly his death

was not reported, and his register record is redacted. In such cases, any Findmypast 12-month subscribers (World and Britain) can complete a form to request an officially closed record to be opened. For those who aren't 12-month subscribers, this process costs £25, and must be made via the Freedom of Information form at discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/PaidSearch/FOI1939Register.

If you or a relative were alive at the time of the register but are under 100 years old and want to see your details, the information can be requested via a subject access request, which is detailed online at ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/principle-6-rights/subject-access-request.

War service

Any individual serving on 29 September 1939 in the Royal Navy, Regular Army, Royal Air Force, Royal Marines, or any of the women's services administered by the Royal Navy, Army or Royal Air Force was absent from the register. If you know a family member was serving in the armed forces and you have a copy of their death certificate, you can request their service record from the Ministry of Defence: www.gov.uk/guidance/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records.

Search findmypast.co.uk results/world-records/1939-register?piece=2096&itemnumber=200

30 result(s)

Order by: Relevance

First name(s)	Last name(s)	Birth year	Borough / District	County	
Harriet M	Aston	1859	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Mary S	Bare (Engels)	1914	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Mabel	Birkett	1877	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Violet C	Birkett	1882	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
May	Bradwell	1910	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Katherine (Kate)	Budden	1896	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Sarah A	Budden	1855	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Janet W	Budden (Upton)	1896	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Evelyn M	Day	1911	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
James	Grimshaw	1870	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Maud	Grimshaw	1884	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview
Maud W	Hallett	1902	Beaconsfield U.D.	Buckinghamshire	Preview

The register entry showing Enid Blyton's neighbours and household members – as found using piece/item search.



Those who contributed to the war effort at home, had not yet joined up, or were conscientious objectors should be listed. The household registration form had a separate column asking for details of 'Membership of Naval, Military or Air Force Reserves or Auxiliary Forces or of Civil Defence Services or Reserves'. Follow up on this war service, by searching for surviving records. Although few records survive for those who worked in Air Raid Precautions (ARP), some details could be found by searching local newspapers and some ARP records may be found at local record offices. The West Yorkshire Archive Service holds a good collection of the West Riding of Yorkshire's ARP Service.

London Fire Brigade Museum has a useful guide for researching Auxiliary Fire Service and NFS members within the capital and beyond: www.london-fire.gov.uk/Research.asp. A comprehensive list of online resources can be found at archiveshub.ac.uk/features/firefighters.shtml.

County Durham Home Guard

records are digitised at TNA www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/records/durham-home-guard.htm. Records from other areas can be requested via the Army Personnel Centre by next of kin for £30.

Evacuation

Not all relatives were registered where we expected to find them. While some were staying temporarily in hospitals or hotels, others had been evacuated. Many of those evacuated after 1 September returned and were re-evacuated in a second wave of evacuation, which took place from 13 June to 18 June 1940.

If you discover a relative was evacuated, either as a child or as a mother or teacher, you can follow this up, as, although not easy to research, some records of evacuation do exist.

Check with relevant archive or school (both host and sending schools) for log books, which can give details on the related schools, medical provision and so on, and admission registers, which can include not only the names of evacuees but

Search smarter

- In order to be as sure as possible that you've found the right household before you part with your £6.95, try filtering the search results.
- Double-check the details such as date of birth, the name of a second household member, or try searching with an address rather than a person.
- Check the preview page carefully. This page is free to view and gives the person's name, year of birth, town and county of residence.
- Where the entry reads, for instance, '2 more people', search again using names you believe should be there.

also the names and addresses of their hosts. London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) reference LCC/EO/WAR (Education Officer's Department: Emergency Wartime Measures) may be useful for those whose ancestors were evacuated from London: search the LMA catalogue via www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/lma. Further details can be obtained via the Evacuees Reunion Association (ERA) at www.evacuees.org.uk.

Also check with the local record office for any surviving parish magazines 1938-1945 for the host area and local newspapers which have not yet been added to the British Newspaper Archive online.

Continuing your search

Use your results to decide who to search for next in the 1939 Register. If you are doing extensive research, it may be worth visiting The National Archives, where you can search the complete register for free. Using the advanced search with care can also help to find information for free without the need to check the full record. Otherwise, for those happy to wait, the register will eventually be included in a Findmypast.co.uk subscription. 🌿

About the author

Emma Jolly MA is a London-based genealogist and writer. Her books include *My Ancestor was a Woman at War*, *Tracing Your Ancestors Using the Census* and *Tracing Your British Indian Ancestors*. An AGRA member, her website is at www.emmajolly.co.uk.



The 1939 Register was key to the administration of ration cards – with rationing on the horizon, starting in January 1940.





How did changes in the agricultural landscape in the 19th century impact on the lives of ag lab ancestors? **David Lewiston Sharpe** explores some Northamptonshire villages to discover why such changes might have propelled some local families to London.

Enclosure, tithes & Tilleys

Open fields once covered the English landscape. In medieval times farming was based on the open field system, which was vital to lower-class livelihoods for the domestic cultivation of crops or grazing of animals. Surveys and excavations in Northamptonshire have shown the underlying pattern of open fields dates from before the Norman Conquest. But the heavy hand of the 'haves' over the 'have-nots' is vividly illustrated by the stealthy progression of land enclosure across the country between the 13th and 20th centuries.

Enclosures restricted the rural poor's access to the land, as an unfolding net of field boundaries was laid over the countryside. The plan was to make a more efficient and economic use of resources, and in the 18th and 19th centuries, Parliamentary enclosure acts ran concurrent with revolutionary advances in technology, leading many agricultural labourers to leave the land of their forefathers for work in London and the industrial towns.

John Clare & enclosure

The 'Inclosure' Acts issued by Parliament from the 1750s had a profound effect on the lives of agricultural labourers – and none more so than in Northamptonshire, where enclosure was particularly stringent in the first half of the 19th century. In one especially famous instance, at the village of Helpston in the north of the county, enclosure from 1809 spawned a literary response

Lost world:
The 'peasant poet' John Clare in 1862.

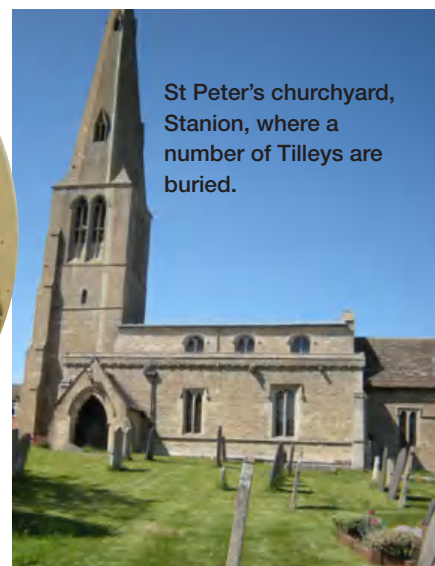


in the works of the 'peasant poet', John Clare (1793-1864). Although his artistic sensibilities arose dissonantly against his background as a farm labourer, Clare's poetry has given us a permanent record of how enclosure must have felt to the rural poor who had lived off the land. Clare's poem 'The Hail-Storm in June 1831' – by which time the enclosure awards affecting Helpston were largely complete – infers that the unrestrained season of freedom of the open fields had turned to a winter of greater poverty:

*'Darkness came o'er like chaos – and the sun
As startled with the terror seemed to run
With quickened dread behind the beetling cloud [...]
Till man from shelter ran and sought the open field.'*

An ag lab family

Some 20 miles from Helpston, land around the villages of Stanion and



St Peter's churchyard, Stanion, where a number of Tilleys are buried.

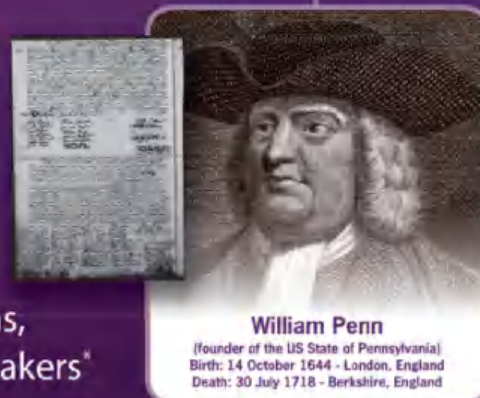
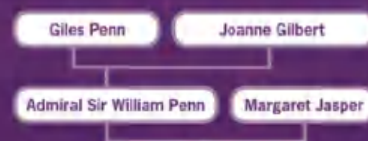
neighbouring Brigstock was enclosed by Act of Parliament in 1795. A tyrannical grid of field boundaries was awarded to landowners – for Stanion this included Lord Cardigan and the Duke of Buccleuch – putting a stranglehold on ag labs and their families, who had worked the land for countless generations.


One such family were the Tilleys; the surname occurs elsewhere, but seems to owe its origins to the East Midlands, chiefly Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire. Records relating to the Tilleys in Stanion survive from the late-1700s, but they emerge more definitely in the early 19th century. 'Tilley' itself suggests a close association with the land – 'tillage' and 'tilling' the soil – as much as the place name Stanion ('Stanere' in the Domesday Book) retains echoes of Anglo-Saxon 'stænen, stæning' or 'stony place'.



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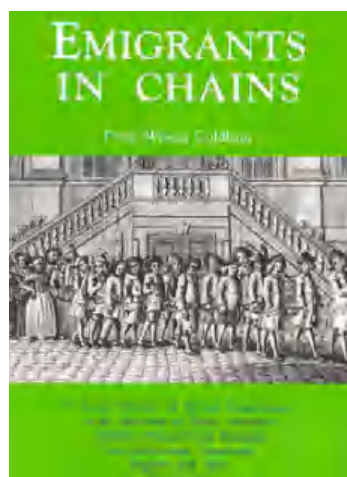
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Research tip
Read TNA's research guide at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/enclosure-awards.

The parish banner, by the altar in St Peter's, showing the coupling of the parish with neighbouring Brigstock.

Maps & surnames

Enclosure around Stanion had begun to take hold in 1635, when one of the surrounding open fields of the parish was partially enclosed. It is the enclosure records that accompany 19th-century changes that really begin to reveal significant details for pinpointing family connections. The enclosure awards name landowners and the area apportioned. Such records are held at The National Archives (TNA) in Kew and in county record offices.

Following enclosure, the process of tithe commutation led to the creation of tithe maps and apportionments and these are useful for tracing those who actually worked the land – the apportionments naming both

landowners and occupiers, whose plots can be located on the tithe maps. TheGenealogist.co.uk, in particular, has a comprehensive tithe records collection for England and Wales (in partnership with TNA), covering 1837 to the early 1850s (see www.thegenealogist.co.uk/Tithe).

Tracing Tilleys

Tilley families appear to have been present in Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire for a century and more by the time those living in the area of Stanion and surrounding parishes felt the pressure of enclosure. Quite how deeply rooted the name was in the East Midlands is attested by documentation relating to the earliest recorded mayor of the town of Northampton itself, one William Tilly [sic], in 1215, appointed by King John. More recently, censuses of the mid-19th century reveal Tilleys working as agricultural labourers, weavers and farm workers, and even boot or shoe makers.

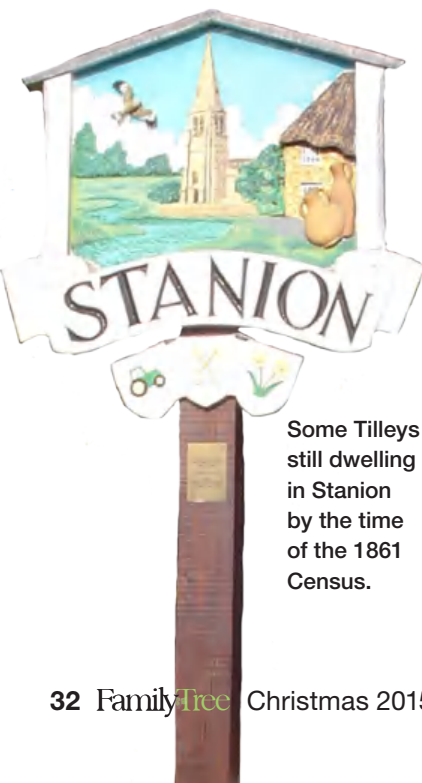
Among about 150 tithe apportionment records for parishes in Northamptonshire (tithe apportionment microfilms IR 29 at TNA), none is given for Stanion, as tithes were commuted following enclosure in 1795-1805. However a speculative look at the tithe apportionment for Brigstock (two or three miles east of Stanion)

provides clues as to the circumstances the Stanion Tilleys may have found themselves in. In addition, the entry for Stanion in Samuel Lewis's *Topographical Dictionary of England* of 1840 states that 'the living is annexed to the vicarage of Brigstock' (the banner in St Peter's Church in Stanion couples the two parishes), suggesting the 300 or so inhabitants at the time were tied more directly to the landowners than the church.

The tithe file for Stanion (IR 18 at TNA), drawn up by the revenue authorities, and dated 1850 (with additions and amendments up to 1858), indeed indicates that tithes elsewhere indebted to vicar and rector were not entirely relevant for this particular community and parish. A response to a query raised by the tithe commissioners directs them to the landowners themselves – it seems the vicar in Stanion had no claim to any of the revenue for lands detailed in the tithe file. Thus not all names linked to places of known association are easily traced in view of the subtleties and complexities of tax and legislation.

London-bound

Several Tilleys – a John for instance – hailed from elsewhere in the county, and are listed as landowners in TNA's tithe apportionment records from the 1840s onwards. With an increase in movement for all strata of society, finding a connection among the Tilley families across Northamptonshire is very difficult in some cases, however



Some Tilleys still dwelling in Stanion by the time of the 1861 Census.

I am related to certain branches of them.

Quite aside from changes in land use, the effects of poor harvests due to bad weather, as well as the period of economic recession following the Napoleonic Wars (after 1815), would have bitten hard initially and generated ripples thereafter. Along with enclosure these factors can be seen to affect how working lives were changed: at the midpoint of the century, around 20 per cent of the national working male population were agricultural labourers – towards the end of the century this was halved.

The 1851 Census indicates one of the Stanion Tilleys, James, had made his way to London following enclosures in the county he had called home. His 14-year-old son was born in 1838 in Northamptonshire, and so the relocation to London had happened a generation or so after the implications of enclosure would have been more keenly felt in Stanion. James Tilley was working as a boot maker – a trade which he may have learned back in Northamptonshire. The trip down the old Great North Road (following the route of the present A1) would have

landed him not far from where the census reveals he lived, a quarter of a mile from Aldersgate Street where the road virtually terminated.

Migrating away from the kind of work in which his family had been traditionally involved on the land, shoemaking was a potentially safer option for James, given its prevalence across his county of origin. Boot- and shoemaking is very much a Northampton industry. A centre for 'cordwainers' as far back as the mid-15th century, there were already nearly 2,000 shoemakers in Northampton itself by the 1841 Census.

James's nephew Frederick Alwyn Tilley made the same journey from Stanion to London in 1881, pursuing the proverbial promise of fortune. Though for Frederick's brother, Ashby Tom Tilley, the job of game keeper to the Duke of Buccleuch had kept him close to the land (there was a pheasantry and deer park to the north-east of the village), it may have been the lack of agricultural work in Stanion that urged Frederick away, or his injury, being blinded in one eye by a blade of grain stubble, after a fall in a ploughed field. Frederick eventually took a clerk's job at an engineering firm in London.

According to a family legend, he had walked the entire journey to London from Northamptonshire. Perhaps along the Great North Road, which his uncle had no doubt followed to set up his boot-making activities the other side of Liverpool Street. At the end of July 1841,

Read up on it

- *My Ancestor was an Agricultural Labourer* by Ian H Waller (Society of Genealogists, 2007);
 - *Essential Maps for Family Historians* by Charles Masters (Countryside Books, 2009);
 - *Tracing Ancestors in Northamptonshire* by Colin R Chapman (Lochin Publishing, 2nd ed, 2000).
- All available at *Family Tree's* Family History Bookshop, www.familyhistorybookshop.co.uk.

the poet John Clare had walked the same road – in the opposite direction – from an asylum in Epping, via Enfield in what is now North London, back to Northamptonshire and the much-changed land of his forefathers.

A John Tilley, who passed away in Ufford within a year of John Clare's death, had lived just a couple of miles from the poet's beloved Helpston. John, of comparable age according to the records, may have been the labourer who in the 1861 Census was living with his wife and grandson in Stanion, where he had been for more than 30 years. John's Stanion-born son James lived adjacent, with his family, working as a stone cutter; there were substantial quarries north of the village.

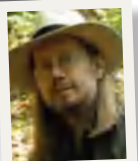
The traditional ways of agricultural life were gone, and Frederick Tilley's grandfather died in 1895 at the Kettering Union Workhouse.



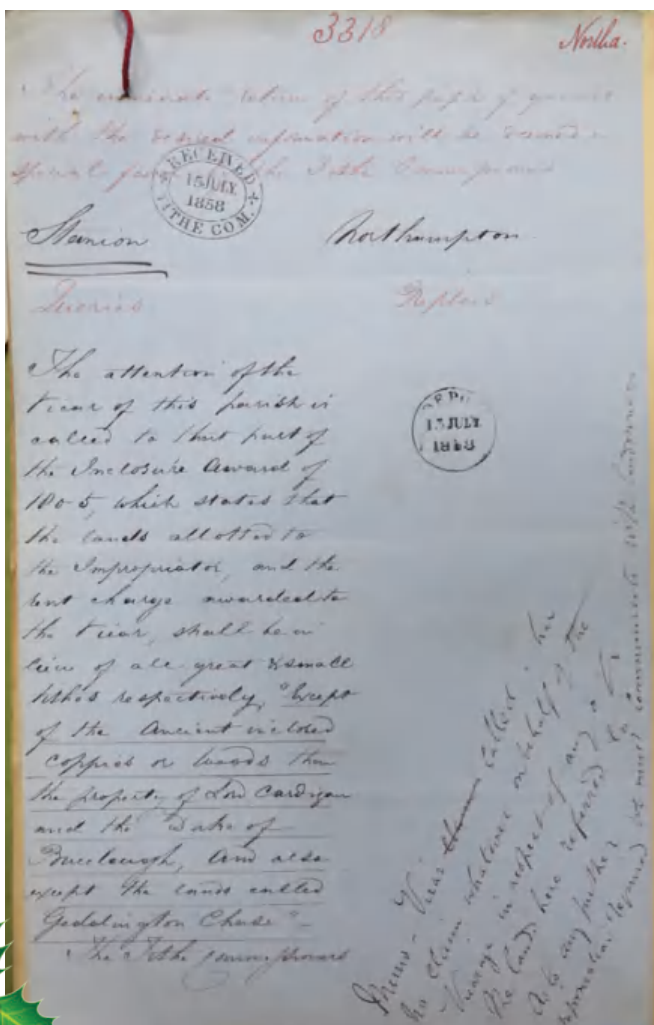
The grave of Ashby Tilley in St Peter's churchyard, Stanion. His son Frederick Alwyn Tilley is said to have walked to London, following the decline in farm work.

About the author

David Lewiston Sharpe is a freelance music teacher and writer, and has published on history, literature, language and genealogy. He has been researching his family history for more than 20 years, and is following several strands of his family in southern England, Ireland, Poland, Germany and Australia. The Jewish origins of 'Lewiston' are a prime focus of his research.



Queries raised by the tithe commissioners, and a response from the vicar at Stanion explaining how income from the land pertained to landowners, not church coffers.





A spa that time forgot



After finding an ancestor living at a mystery spa on the 1851 Census, **Sue Hassett** set off on a research journey into the fascinating world of hot springs and alternative therapies.

How many people find a Georgian spa in the family I wonder? It was the last thing I expected when I began researching my paternal ancestry some years ago.

The popular spa towns favoured by the wealthy in the 18th and 19th centuries are well known and the practice of travelling to hot and cold springs in search of a cure dates back to ancient times. The remains of Roman baths in Bath, Buxton and York are evidence of this.

But how many have heard of a tiny spa in rural Somerset called Capland Spa? I first came across it on the 1851 Census when investigating the background of my 2x great-grandmother, Sarah Rose Walker. I already knew she came from a little place called Capland, just a few miles from Ilminster, but I was unfamiliar with the area.

In 1851 her family was living in 'Walker's Cottage' and I noticed that

close by another family of Walkers of the right age to be her grandparents lived at 'Capland Spa'. This triggered an interesting trail of research.

Where to begin?

Firstly, I Googled it but without success. So next I tried the British Newspaper Archive (BNA, britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk and at Findmypast.co.uk) and here I struck gold. I found advertisements in newspapers from around the country for something called 'The European Institution of Health', based at Capland Spa, near Taunton. The adverts appeared in the mid-1840s when, the 1841 Census confirmed, the Walker family lived there. So were these people my ancestors and what on earth was this pretentious-sounding establishment?

The birth, marriage and death records on the popular genealogy websites failed to provide a link between my 2x great-grandmother, her father, Thomas Walker and the elder

Thomas Walker of Capland Spa, but – given the names, proximity and fact both men were tailors – I was pretty convinced Thomas Walker the elder was my ancestor. I confirmed this via a newspaper report about Capland Spa that appeared in a Taunton paper in 1931, which referred to Thomas Walker's granddaughter, a Mrs Anna Meare – the married name of my 2x great-grandmother's sister. It's amazing how information that doesn't appear in the official records can come to light in a newspaper report more than a century later!

Alternative therapies

I still had very little information about the spa itself and adverts for The European Institution of Health weren't much help. They made no reference to Thomas Walker.

A little reading around the subject informed me that, much like today, alternative healing practices flourished in the 19th century. Hydrotherapy

95	Capland Spa	Thomas Walker	Head	Mar	75	Taylor	Somerset
		Anna Do	Wife	Mar	59		Somerset
		William Do	Son	A	45	Taylor	Somerset

Mysterious address: Thomas Walker and family at Capland Spa on the 1851 Census.



'Taking the waters' was very popular in earlier times, as this illustration of a spa well in Harrogate in 1829 shows.

for example, a therapy involving immersion in hot and cold baths and stressing the importance of diet and a healthy environment, was introduced to England in the 1840s and attracted many famous patients including Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens and Florence Nightingale. The ancient practice of homeopathy also achieved great popularity. Both these therapies were reputable and considering that mainstream medicine at the time favoured bloodletting and purging, which frequently made conditions worse, alongside a range of highly addictive drugs including opium, it's easy to see why many were drawn to more benign alternatives.

The so-called European Institution of Health, however, was less reputable. The advertisements made ludicrous claims about curing everything from deafness and blindness to fits, agues, hysteria and even lunacy. No cure, no charge inducements were offered and the whole operation smacked of modern commercialism. The purveyors of these miraculous products were Messrs McKinsey. So where did my ancestor fit in? Am I descended from a charlatan?

I later discovered that 'Messrs' McKinsey were in fact one man, a Henry John McKinsey who in the 1861 Census styled himself a 'patent medicine proprietor' and who from around 1850 was based on the outskirts of Exeter. Quite possibly Thomas Walker believed that by associating himself with this shady operator he might bring the spa to the attention of a wider public.

Story of the spa

I continued to plough through the BNA and eventually came across other articles relating directly to my ancestor and to the hot spring itself, and little by little I pieced together the story of the forgotten spa.

In 1815 the *Taunton Courier* reported that the spring had been discovered by a Rev Wood on Thomas Walker's property. Keen to promote the efficacy of the valuable asset gushing from his land, Thomas devised a plan to exploit its potential. Three furnaces were installed in the room where the

well was sunk for the evaporation of the salts, which were tested and found to be of the same chemical composition and quality as those at Cheltenham Spa.

The healing properties of water and salts became well known and both were widely distributed. Local people could buy a glass of the water for 1d. However, my ancestor was not satisfied with purely local trade. In order to accommodate visitors from further afield, a building called The Round House was put up adjoining his own home. The enterprise was clearly taking off and between 1815 and 1855 the spa gained quite a reputation. The so-called 'chalybeate' waters (meaning iron-rich) also contained iodine, an effective remedy for skin disorders, including scrofula, around since medieval times and sometimes known as the 'King's evil'.

So if the waters were so beneficial, I began to wonder why Capland Spa long ago vanished into obscurity, particularly as one report suggested that, with sufficient investment and more aggressive promotion, it could have become a fashionable resort.

Beginning of the end

The answer seems to be Thomas's death, reported in *The North Devon Journal* in 1855. He apparently dropped dead while walking home from Hatch Beauchamp Baptist Chapel and an inquest gave the verdict 'death by visitation of God'. This was a fairly common verdict at the time, when coroners had no idea about the cause of death. Probably it was nothing more sinister than a heart attack. But whatever it was, it was the beginning of the end for the spa.

It seems no one else in the family was interested in developing the spa further. They were tailors after

Capland Spa is carved into the stonework over the front door of the surviving house, hinting at its exotic past.



A curious census find



Advertisement for the European Institution of Health at Capland Spa, in the *Oxford University and City Herald*, 1845.

all! At some point the well was filled in and the room was later used as a cider cellar. The Round House for many years served as a school and was demolished after 1958.

When Thomas's widow sold the property in 1866 it appears Capland Spa, the health resort, plunged into oblivion.

Capland Spa today

So what remains of the spa? The house, though probably much altered, is still there with the name Capland Spa legible in the stonework above the front door. The Round House is long gone, as is any other evidence of a medicinal hot spring.

Capland today is as tiny as in the 19th century; no more than a scattering of houses a mile or so outside the village of Hatch Beauchamp. It's hard to imagine it might ever have posed a threat to the likes of Bath or Harrogate!

Nevertheless I applaud my ancestor, Thomas, for his enterprise and who knows perhaps the hot spring is still bubbling away underground awaiting rediscovery and all the fame and fortune that passed it by.

And to think this all arose from a curious address on a census record! 🌿

About the author

For many years Sue Hassett worked as a teacher of English to foreign students. Around 2000 she started writing short stories and was delighted to have several published nationally. Her interest in family history began some six years ago and since then she has written a detailed account of the lives of her paternal ancestors, which she has had the pleasure of sharing with family members.





Stories of everyday folk

Several years ago I approached publishers with an idea for a book about my mother's adventures in 1950s' America. Gwenda, then a 23-year-old nurse, had left the UK in 1957 with her best friend Pat to work for a year at a hospital in Cleveland, Ohio. One of the first things they did was buy an old car, and they went travelling at every opportunity. Eventually they took off on an 18-month-long road trip with three new friends, Molly, Maureen and Celia, to see the rest of the country. One editor said that she might have been interested in the story if the subjects had been well known figures, but as I tend to find the lives of ordinary folk just as interesting as the famous, I refused to let that comment deter me. I carried on with my efforts and ultimately my book, *Bedpans and Bobby Socks*, was

published by Sphere, an imprint of the Little, Brown Book Group (www.littlebrown.co.uk).

I am not saying this to show off, nor to suggest that everyone's family story can be sold to a traditional publisher with a bit of perseverance – though if you think you're sitting on something special, it might be worth a try. But I do believe that even stories that lack obvious commercial appeal can, with some discipline and imagination, be written down so that others can read and enjoy them too.

What makes a good story?

Whether it's your own or someone else's, a good tale is rarely a life lived from A to Z, or a simple amalgamation of facts. (One person I know has written a tome about his family so vast and so comprehensive that, though an invaluable reference

book, it will probably never be read.) No, most of the best reads are accounts of part of a life – perhaps of a childhood, or a life lived in wartime, or an interesting career.

So find your subject and make it your guiding star – though your story will inevitably make detours here and there and be all the better for it. It helps to be able to sum it up in a sentence. I suppose mine for *Bedpans and Bobby Socks* is explained in the book's subtitle: 'Five British nurses on the American road trip of a lifetime'. It isn't a book about nursing – though that comes into it; it isn't a travel book – though thousands of miles are covered. It is about five young women and their interactions with the people and places they visit at a time when such a journey was unusual enough to make newspaper headlines, which indeed it did!

[illegible]

Shopping List

Bacon	25.	Butter	1. 50
Eggs	25.	1000 Raisins	1. 40
Milk	30	Egg yagers	1. 00
Soup	35	Relish	1. 00
Ice cream	45. 00	Snacks	3. 20
(Cinnamon rolls)		Apples	75
1/8 Wellington loaf	2. 14		
Food	1. 39		
Candy	90		
Pot	3. 73		
Wheatland Gro.	3. 90		
1/8 Rhubarb	75		
Gro. Candy	2. 45		
	34. 93		

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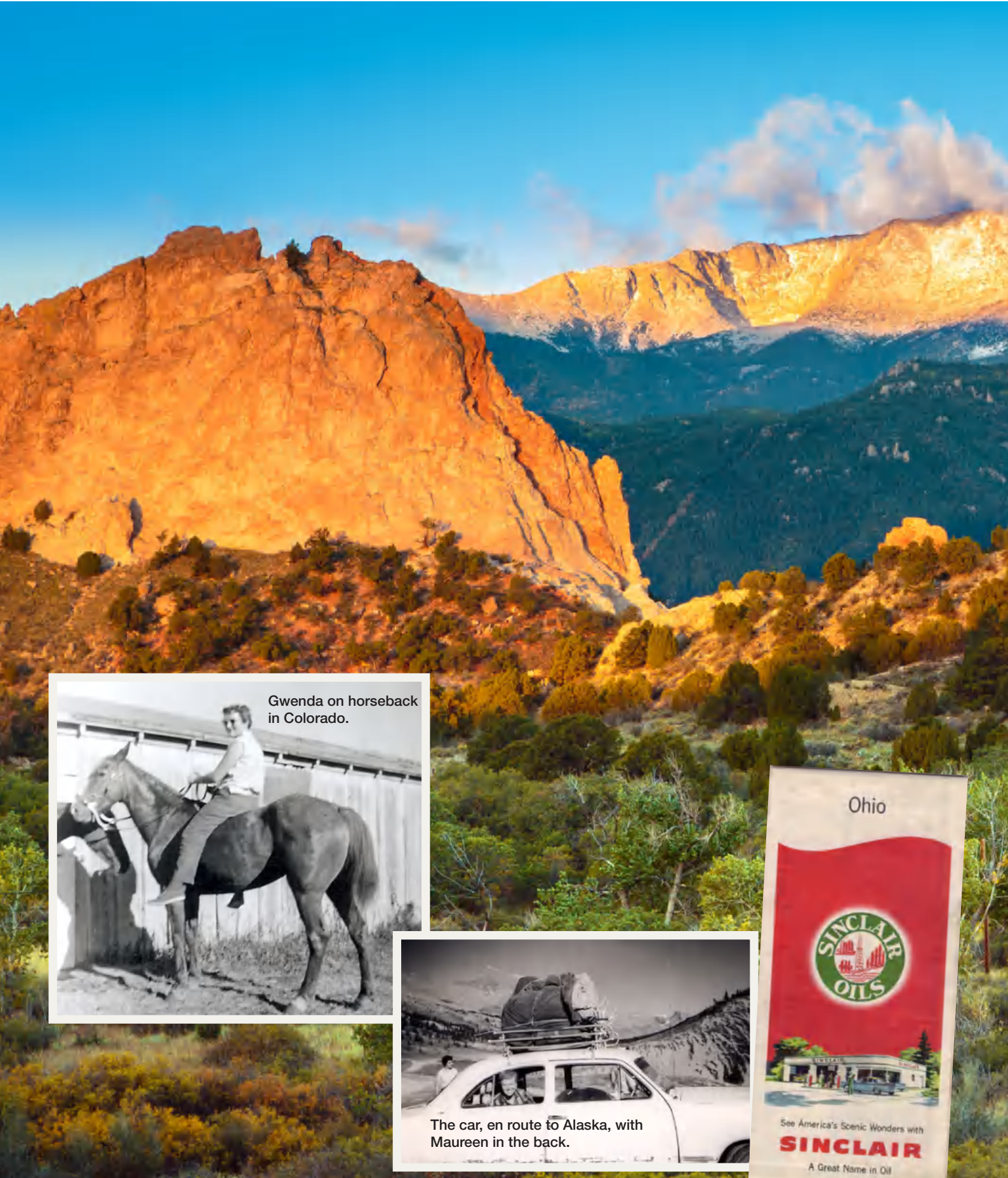
Telegram

A telegram booking a passage home.

Five road-trip nurses and a friend at the Hotel Colorado, Glenwood Springs, CO 1958.

The five road-trip nurses and a friend at the Hotel Colorado, Glenwood Springs, CO 1958.

 www.family-tree.co.uk Christmas 2015 FamilyTree 37



Gwenda on horseback in Colorado.



The car, en route to Alaska, with Maureen in the back.



Find your subject and make it your guiding star

Sources of inspiration & fact

I was fortunate with the resources I had at my disposal. Gwenda and Pat, now both in their eighties, had left an amazing legacy behind them; the hundreds of letters they had written home to their parents. When Gwenda decided to type up hers, I read them for the first time and heard her voice – at once familiar and unknown – speak out to me across the years. I suppose that was when it dawned on me just how special her experience had been. For quite apart from adventures I had heard before, like breaking down on the Alaska Highway and drinking tea at gunpoint in a deserted ski lodge (yes, really!), the letters told me how shocking and exciting it had been to find herself in this alien society, one in which women her mother's age wore shorts in public, even the hospital orderly came to work by car, and everyone from the cleaner to the top surgeon sat down together in the hospital canteen. And her reactions told me just as much about the post-war Britain she had left behind.

There was also a trunk full of paper treasures that told stories of their own – photos, postcards, signed napkins and menus, shopping lists, tourist leaflets... As Gwenda is usually quite ruthless about throwing things away, who knows what your own searches might unearth! Time can enrich the most mundane item with meaning and once it is waved in front of the nose of its owner, it will undoubtedly unlock some memories.

But without letters, without ephemera, how else do we find our stories? The most obvious answer is to ask questions. Emails or letters are a great way to get things started. I find quite specific questions work best. 'Tell me about your childhood' is just too open. Instead try, 'What was it like being the oldest/youngest/only child?'; 'Was it a hard life for your mother?'. Then follow this up with a conversation. (With Christmas approaching and family reunions taking place, what better opportunity!) A conversation that is allowed to ebb and flow is a wonderful

tool for stimulating memories.


Someone who confessed in his letters to having little recall of his wartime childhood suddenly opened up over a relaxing pub meal and regaled me with a whole wealth of stories!

Photos are also an excellent way of loosening memories, and if there are no family albums to pore over, what about one of those books of old picture postcards?

Get to know their world

If there are other people you can question, then do. I wrote to some of Gwenda and Pat's old friends in America to find out what they remembered about the days they shared. I also had great fun delving into 1950s America, becoming an expert – for a short while! – in its books and films, its politics and social issues, and even its cars, to better understand the world my characters were living in.

Let your characters shine

Wanting to make the tale as fresh- 



sounding as possible, I wrote the book in the first person, taking on Gwenda's persona. It felt strange at first, but once I allowed her to speak she quickly took over. I found that by creating a slightly exaggerated version of her – and indeed of all of the characters – they came across more vividly on paper. Don't be afraid to have some fun with them!

Do allow your characters to talk to each other. A book that is all reported speech, or none at all, can become monotonous. Re-imagining conversations, providing they remain true to the speaker's character, is a great way to bring your writing to life as well as to convey information.

Look for new perspectives

The outsider's eye that gave Gwenda's story its unique perspective was the selling point of my own memoir, *Is the Vicar In, Pet?*. It's about growing up in a vicarage in the 1970s in a place called Ashington, then known as the largest pit village in the world. Arriving in this tight knit community from the city, I saw wonder in the mundane – even outside lavatories seemed exotic to my eyes as a newcomer! Perhaps not surprisingly, I sometimes felt as if I was writing about an era earlier than the nurses' glamorous 1950s USA, but that only helped to confirm it was a tale worth telling.

My next book, *When the War Is Over*, will be published by Sphere in April 2016 and is about Gwenda's evacuation to a village in the Lake District during the Second World War. This time there were even fewer resources, apart from my mother's vivid memory and a handful of photos. But once I began, I felt as if I was entering familiar territory with so much historical information readily available online and so many films and books to draw inspiration from. I also included memories of other wartime children in order to provide a counterpoint to Gwenda's somewhat happier experience.

Whatever you decide to do, good luck. And remember that once you have your story, discipline and imagination really are your best tools! 🌿



Tourist leaflets from the 1950s.



Barbara with her sisters at an abandoned colliery that lay behind the local churchyard in Ashington, taken after the family's move to the mining town in 1969. Left to right: Barbara, Sarah and Ruth.



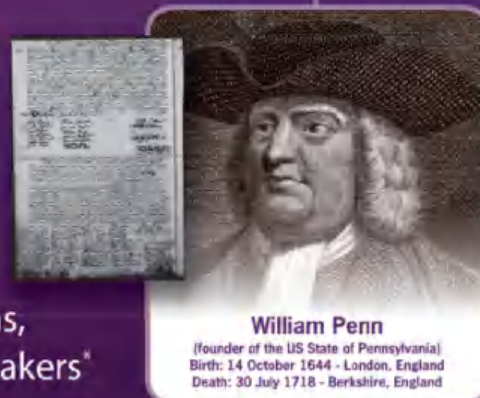
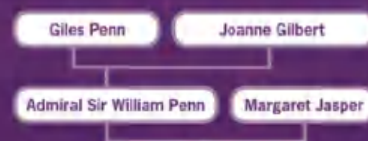
About the author

Barbara Fox grew up in Newcastle and now lives in West Sussex with her husband and two sons. Her books *Bedpans and Bobby Socks*, *One Girl and Her Dogs* and *Is the Vicar in, Pet?* are all published by Little, Brown. *When the War Is Over* will be published next year. She is determined to write a novel one day but keeps getting caught up in real lives instead!



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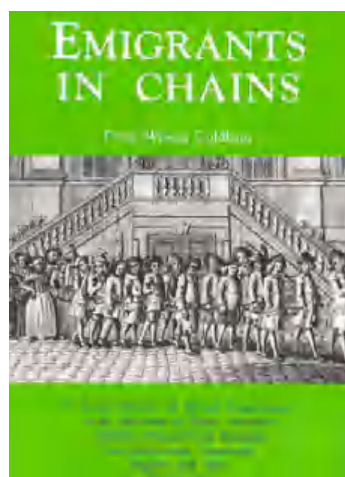
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The tale of a veil

Family heirloom: the veil that connects six generations.

When **Caroline Makein** inherited a beautiful lace veil she became fascinated by the story behind it.

When I became custodian of an Irish lace veil, I was curious to discover more about this precious family heirloom and especially the brides who wore it. My mother thought it was probably Limerick lace and my grandmother had helpfully left a letter naming some of the women who had worn it, the earliest wedding taking place in 1830.

Limerick lace

I learned that the Limerick lace industry was established in 1829 when businessman, Charles Walker, located to Limerick with lace-makers brought from England and he opened a tambour lace factory. From its origins until about 1870, lace was produced in factories; after this time it was produced mostly in workshops and homes.

There are two kinds of Limerick lace, 'tambour', which is worked with a fine hook, and 'needlerun' lace, which is worked with a needle. Tambour lace is sewn onto net stretched across a frame, like a tambourine, and stitches are worked onto the net in a cotton thread, using a tambour hook. Needlerun lace is where the stitches are darned with a sewing needle on to

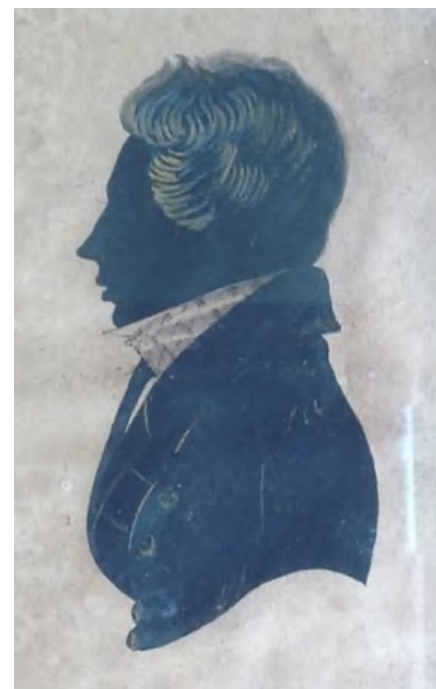
a net; this type was introduced in the late 1830s by Jonas Rolf.

Lace-making gave employment to thousands of women, especially during the famine years, with Catholic nuns introducing it to convents and religious houses throughout Ireland. It was estimated that in 1851 each lace-maker maintained two or three other family members. Large-scale factory-based lace manufacture collapsed in the 1860s with the introduction of machine-made lace from Nottingham, though it revived again in the 1880s and into the early 20th century, mostly made by home workers.

The first bride?

Tambour Limerick lace was available from 1829, so it is just possible that my 3x great-grandmother, Jane Kennedy, purchased the veil to wear when she married James Agnew Greene at Lisburn Cathedral on 13 September, 1830. The veil would have then been the height of fashion.

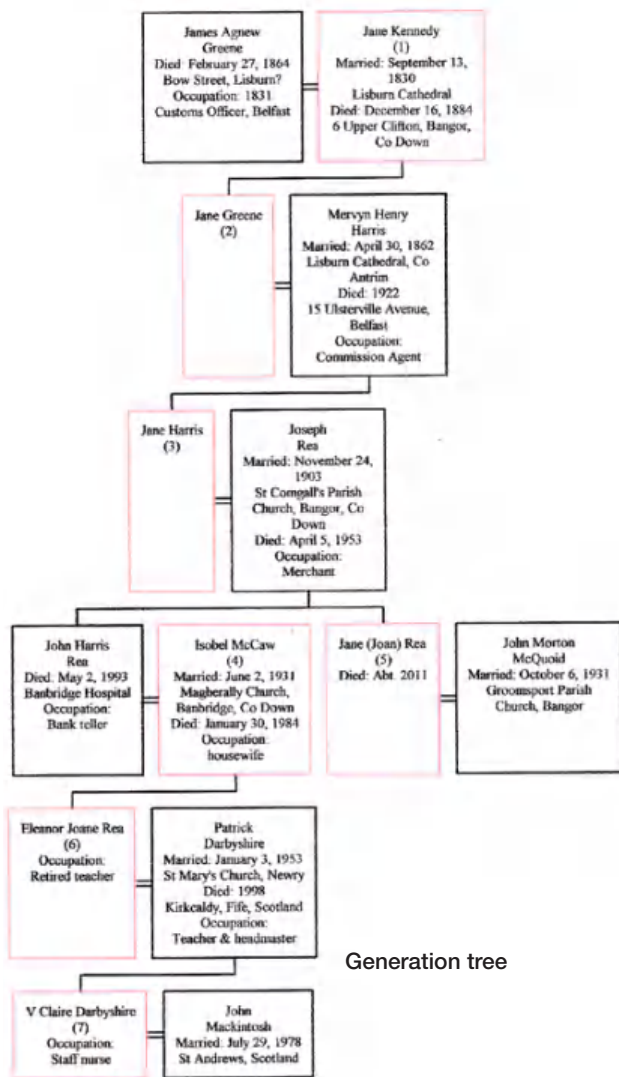
Jane's parents were Samuel Kennedy of Grovegreen, Lisburn, and Jane Carson, and I know very little about them apart from they are buried beneath a gravestone in Blaris Cemetery, Lisburn. Sadly there is no picture of Jane Kennedy, though we



Silhouette of James Agnew Greene, pro-collector of customs, Belfast.

do have a silhouette of her husband, probably pre-dating their marriage.

My grandfather's research noted that James Greene was a customs officer for the Port of Belfast and lived at 6 College Square East. I confirmed this online at www.proni.gov.uk where the street directories



Generation tree



Joseph Rea, Caroline's great-grandfather, in his electoral picture in 1908.

Advertisement in *Belfast Newsletter* 1900 for Joseph Rea's business.

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for Belfast and the Province of Ulster are freely available. James worked at the Customs House on the corner of Hanover Quay and was the 'first clerk' there from at least 1831-1847, and about 1844 he moved to 5 The Crescent, Botanic Road. The *Northern Whig* newspaper of 17 October 1833 reported the discovery of smuggled spirits on a boat and the subsequent court case when Mr James Greene, pro-collector in the Belfast Customs House, was named as having received the confiscated liquor. James predeceased his wife on 27 February 1864 leaving her and his merchant son, John Kennedy Greene, as executors. According to his will his two married daughters, Mrs Elizabeth McConnell and Mrs Jane Harris (my 2x great-grandmother), 'have each received their fair and just proportions of my property I will devise and bequeath to each of them the nominal sum of one shilling each'. His other two unmarried daughters

received £250.

On 30 April 1862 James and Jane's daughter, Jane, wore the same veil as she followed in her mother's footsteps down the aisle of Lisburn Cathedral, to marry Mervyn Henry Harris. He formerly lived at the Northern Bank House, Keady, Co Armagh, and was the son of the Reverend George Harris and Elizabeth Gray. According to the 1884 *Belfast and Province of Ulster Directory*, Mervyn was a commission agent living at 24 Fleetwood Street, Belfast.

Was Jane a suffragette?

Jane and Mervyn Harris had eight children; their second daughter, Jane (called Joan by the family), was born on 15 September 1878. She became the third bride to use the veil when she married my great-grandfather, Joseph Rea, on 2 June 1903, at St Comgall's Parish Church in Bangor. That same year Emmeline Pankhurst started the Women's Social and

Political Union (WSPU) to fight for votes for women. Did Jane/Joan sympathise with the movement? History doesn't relate the tale, but her new husband, Joseph, had strong political, religious and moral convictions.

A member of the Crescent Presbyterian Church and prominent in the Bible Temperance Society in 1892, there was a complaint in the *Belfast Newsletter* on 8 June 1899 by the Belfast Family Grocers' and Spirit Dealers' regarding a speech he had made describing the shops of spirit grocers as 'dens of iniquity'. In 1895 he established Joseph Rea and Son, an engineers' representatives business, at 32 Ann Street, Belfast. In 1908 he was elected town councillor for the Dufferin Ward of Bangor.

A long partnership

Joan bore him two sons and three daughters, the first being my grandfather, John (Jack) Harris Rea,



LOOKING BACK SIX GENERATIONS

born 16 September 1904 at Bangor. Jack married the fourth veil-wearing bride, Isobel McCaw, on 2 June 1931 at Magherally Parish Church near Banbridge. In 1981, I attended their golden wedding party, kept secret from them until the last minute; it was a very happy occasion celebrating a long loving partnership.

In October 1931 the veil had another outing when Jack's sister, Joan, married John McQuoid at Groomsport Parish Church, Bangor. My newly-married grandparents

smiled happily in the family group photograph, despite the weddings taking place during the Depression in the 1930s! And, judging by the photographs, they didn't stint on the flowers at either wedding.

The fifth generation wedding was my parents, Eleanor Rea and Pat Darbyshire, who married in January 1953, in Newry. My mother's dress made from gold brocade complemented the veil beautifully. By the summer of 1975, when I returned home to Scotland to be married, the

white wedding dress I chose simply wouldn't have looked right with the lace veil, which had faded to an ivory colour. It fell to my youngest sister, Claire, to become the sixth generation and most recent bride to wear the veil three years later.

Now the delicate lace is carefully stored away in acid-free tissue paper awaiting a 21st century bride, perhaps one of our daughters or granddaughters – the tail-end of this veil's 185-year history. 🌿

The wedding of author's grandparents, John Rea and Isobel McCaw, 2 June 1931.



Family group at Joan Rea's wedding in October 1931. Back row, starting far left: Jack and Isobel Rea, then Harry Rea and the groom, John McQuoid.

Find out more

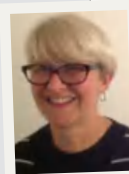
- *A Dictionary of Lace* by Pat Earnshaw (Dover Press, 1999).
- *Amazing Lace: A History of the Limerick Lace Industry* by Dr Matthew Potter (Limerick Museum & Archives, 2014).
- *Tracing Your Irish Ancestors* by John Grenham (Gill & Macmillan Ltd, 2012).
- www.proni.gov.uk – For online records such as wills and Post Office Directories.
- www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk – For newspaper archives.
- www.visionofireland.org – Research Ireland 1821-2001.
- www.limerick.ie/historicalresources/limerickarchives/limericklace – Read about the Limerick lace project.
- www.nidirect.gov.uk/family-history – To research Irish family history.
- rosemarycathcart.blogspot.co.uk – A pictorial blog on Irish lace.



The author's parents, Pat Darbyshire and Eleanor Rea, on their wedding day on 3 January 1953.

About the author

Caroline Makein has worked for many years as a professional genealogist researching throughout Scotland. She runs Fife Rootsearch, a research service at www.scottishgenealogyresearch.co.uk. She has a certificate in Scottish Family History Studies from Stirling University and she is a member of both the Scottish Genealogical Society and the Scottish Genealogy Network.

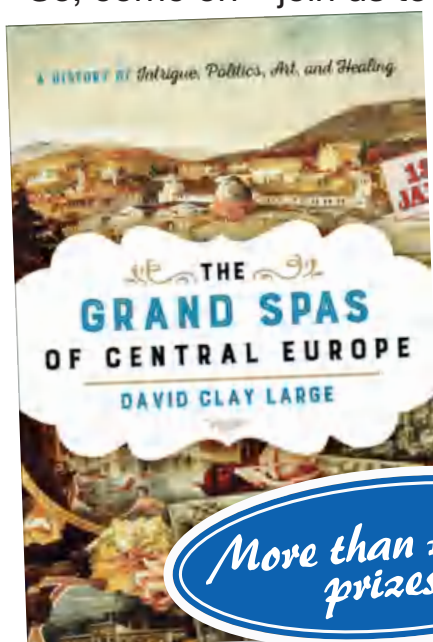


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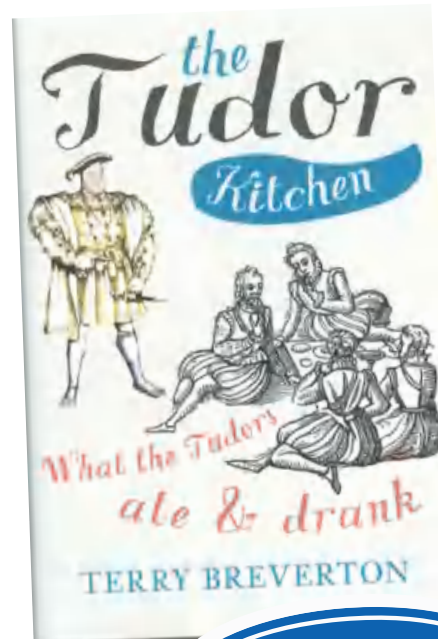
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The Grand Spas of Central Europe

If you enjoyed learning about our ancestors' fondness for spas in Sue Hassett's story this issue (pp34-35), then you'll love reading more about the topic in *The Grand Spas of Central Europe: A History of Intrigue, Politics, Art, and Healing*. This new book by David Clay Large, senior fellow at the University of California's Institute of European Studies, presents the first major study of grand European spas in English. Take an irresistible tour through grand spa towns such as Baden-Baden, Bad Ems, Bad Gastein, Karlsbad and Marienbad, from Greco-Roman antiquity to the present, with special focus on the era between the French Revolution and WW2.

Conventional medicine being quite primitive for much of history, many people went to spas in hopes of curing everything from cancer to gout. But 'curists' also went to play, be entertained and to socialise and, in their heyday, the grand spas were hotbeds of cultural creativity and even high-level politics, where treaties were negotiated, craft alliances formed and wars planned.

Published in hardback and as an ebook by Rowman & Littlefield Publishers (RRP £23.95, ISBN: 978144222373).

Food, glorious food

Discover what your ancestors ate and drank, their table manners, culinary traditions and more in these two delectable new hardback titles from Amberley Publishing, *The Tudor Kitchen* by Terry Breverton (RRP £20) and *Dining with the Victorians* by Emma Kay (RRP £18.99). See our reviews on page 53 this issue!

How to enter

We have one copy each of *Grand Spas*, *Dining with the Victorians* and *The Tudor Kitchen* to give away. To enter, email subscribers@family-tree.co.uk with 'Grand spas', 'Dining with the Victorians' or 'Tudor kitchen' in the subject line.

Winners

Our FT September subscriber competition winners are: Jacqueline Saker and Liane Buckle (*Timeline* game); and Margaret Hine (*Battle of Britain Experience* book).

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To enter the offers on this page, please email subscribers@family-tree.co.uk. When you contact us, please include your name, subscriber number and postal address (print subscribers), or please state if you are a digital subscriber. To enter by post, please write to the address on page 5. No cash alternatives will be offered and the editor's decision is final. All offers and competitions end on 18 February 2016 unless otherwise stated. Kindly note, the competitions and offers on this page are open to *Family Tree* subscribers only (print and/or digital).

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My personal Magna Carta connection

When **Jeffrey Wayne Seemans** began his genealogical adventure in August 2014, he never imagined that his search would end with a personal ancestral connection to the Magna Carta – a discovery that he made just prior to the 800th anniversary to celebrate this world-changing medieval document.

My journey began in 2014 when I saw an episode of 'Who Do You Think You Are?' on television, which mentioned the College of Arms in London. I wrote a letter inquiring whether the college could help me verify that one of my ancient ancestors, a Sir William Blakiston, Lord of Blakiston, really did exist in the late 1300s.

Back in 1994 I had been given some family genealogical charts that included him. I had hired Mary Abel, a genealogist from the State of Maryland, to do some family research, and she had provided me with a wealth of information about the Blakiston side of the Seemans family. However, I waited too long to ask her how she discovered these relatives from so long ago, and when I called her home last year, I was told by her daughter that she had passed away. I would now have to begin this journey of rediscovery on my own.

I soon received a response to my letter to the College of Arms. It would be pleased to look into the matter if and when I sent it a cheque for a considerable amount. I decided to take another route.

I soon realised that I needed to find a genealogist in England, and, with

a bit of wonderful luck, I discovered Ros Bott from Warwickshire, on the internet. She provided me with a link to British History Online, www.british-history.ac.uk, which included the Blakiston family pedigree within a publication dating from 1823: *The History and Antiquities of the County Palatine of Durham: vol. 3: Stockton and Darlington wards* by Robert Surtees, a famous Durham genealogist from that era. To my amazement, many of the names and dates on the pedigree matched the details on my Blakiston family charts that had been sent to me by my Maryland genealogist in the 1990s.

My connection to the ancient Blakiston family is through my great-grandmother, Mary Ellen Blakiston Thomas. She and my great-grandfather, John Lambert Seemans, died in the mid-1920s almost 30 years before I was born, but I have excellent photographs of them and have visited the cemetery in Smyrna, Delaware, where they are both buried. The Blakiston family in America can be traced to several ancestors from England. My ancestor is George Blakiston who immigrated to the colonies in 1668, specifically to St Mary's County, Maryland.

Born on 1 March 1611, he was a

mercator, councillor, and alderman. His father was Rev Marmaduke Blakiston of Newton Hall, Durham. George married at St Andrew's, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Northumberland, on 15 October 1638. In 1660, his life changed forever. Upon the Restoration in England, all of his property was confiscated, although the Corporation of Newcastle granted him £500 because 'he did many good services for this town'. His brother, John Blakiston, esq, was one of the regicide judges who signed the death warrant of King Charles I on 29 January 1648/9. Clearly, George became 'collateral damage' given what his brother had done. In due course, he left England for the colonies, but only lived another year and died in 1669. However, it seems that English justice, of a sort, was later bestowed upon the American branch of the Blakiston family. My great-grandmother's great-grandfather, Benjamin Blakiston, was granted 2,500 acres of land called 'Deer Park' from Charles, Lord Baltimore, in 1746. Perhaps this made up for what happened to his ancestor George back in 1660 in England. George's family remained in the colonies, as did successive generations all the way to my great-grandmother Mary Ellen.

Being interested in the history of

Part of Jeff Seemans' application to Brookfield Publishing Co, outlining his ancestral lineage.



Jeff's connection to the ancient Blakiston family is through his great-grandmother, Mary Ellen Blakiston Thomas, seen here with her husband, Jeff's great-grandfather, John Lambert Seemans.

felt like I had just won the lottery! The discovery occurred right before the 800th anniversary of the Magna Carta, which is revered in America at least as much as it is in England. Certainly, our Declaration of Independence and our United States Constitution were influenced and inspired by it. To discover such a personal family connection to one of the most important legal documents in the world has been unlike anything I have ever experienced. To be linked by even a single thread has made me feel both humble and proud.

About the author

Jeffrey Wayne Seemans lives in Delaware, USA with his wife, Pamela, an artist. Currently a landscape architect, he plans to retire to Sussex County, near the Atlantic Coast, and enjoy his hobbies of golf, billiards and family history.



The Royal Descents of 600 Immigrants

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...

Royal Descents of 600 Immigrants to the American Colonies or the United States is available to search on Ancestry.co.uk or in printed form from Genealogical.com.

the families that had immigrated to the colonies, I came across a book at the Delaware Historical Society in Wilmington, Delaware: *Royal Descents of 600 Immigrants to the American Colonies or the United States* authored by Gary Boyd Roberts (2008). Within the pages George Blakiston's lineage back to Edward III, King of England, was laid out right before my eyes!

I thought that such a discovery would be the final concluding success of my genealogical journey, but the

internet played one more important role. It revealed that George Blakiston was also related to John Fitz Robert of Warkworth, Northumberland, one of the 25 surety barons who presented King John with the Magna Carta on 15 June 1215.

I bought a four-volume book entitled, *Magna Carta Ancestry: A Study in Colonial and Medieval Families* by Douglas Richardson published in 2011, and this showed every ancestor of George Blakiston back to John Fitz Robert. I

3-month Gold subscription

Take advantage of a free three-month Gold Personal Premium subscription to TheGenealogist.co.uk – worth £24.95 – to explore your family history this Christmas. **Laura Berry** tells us what's on offer.

This issue every *Family Tree* reader is invited to sign up for a free three-month Gold subscription to TheGenealogist, where millions of birth, marriage and death records from England, Wales and overseas are accessible, as well as census returns, parish registers, wills, military records, landowner returns, an image archive and many other valuable resources.

The website has everything you need to start building your family tree from scratch and, for seasoned researchers, TheGenealogist's unique tools help to bust those brickwalls, using the Master Search and SmartSearch to home in on elusive forebears.

First steps

With the General Register Office (GRO) indexes to births, marriages and deaths available on TheGenealogist from 1837–2005, you can build your family tree working back through time. The certificates need to be ordered from www.gro.gov.uk, and give both parents' names on birth certificates, including the mothers' maiden names, fathers' names on marriage certificates and often next-of-kin on death certificates. They also describe your ancestors' occupations and tell you where they lived.

These records form the basic building blocks, alongside census returns taken every 10 years from 1841 and

available up to 1911. The censuses offer a snapshot of the household on a given evening and contain some fascinating details. Records reveal it was all too much for 60-year-old John Wint of Brockley, who described his wife Jane as a 'household slave' on their 1911 Census return and scrawled 'Why don't you enquire how many teeth I have in my head!'

Finding elusive ancestors

You can search the censuses a variety of ways on TheGenealogist, selecting to either look for a person, a family group or an address on the Master Search. This wide range of options helps to identify slippery ancestors and those with common surnames. The person search has a keyword box for any words that you would expect to see, like an occupation, place of birth or address.

Ancestors' names don't always appear in the records as we might expect. As well as using wildcards and playing around with the phonetic and standard surname filters to look for variant spellings, you can leave the name boxes blank, entering just a keyword, year of birth and selecting a county – particularly useful for identifying name variations.

Going further

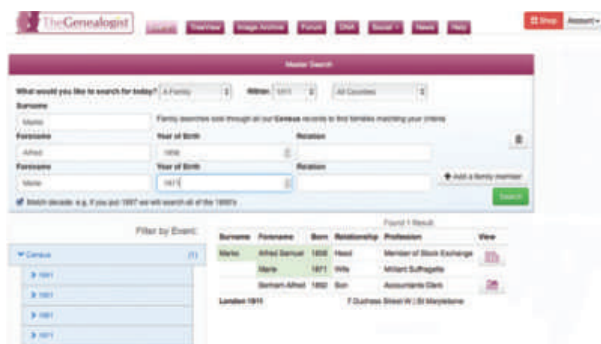
The Gold subscription includes a major collection of wills proved in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury

from 1384 to 1858, as well as calendars to probate records from lesser ecclesiastical courts. Wills usually mention many close relations, and it's not uncommon to discover family feuds resulting in people being disinherited.

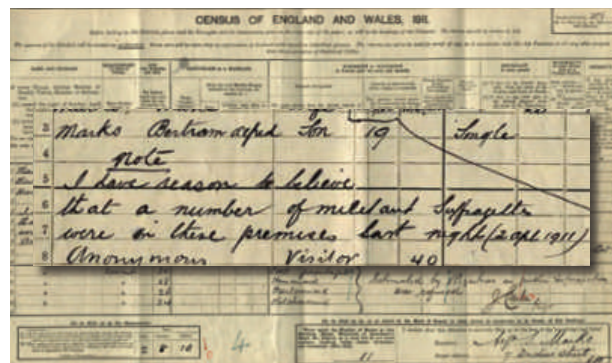
Parish records take us back beyond 1837 when civil registration began, but if your relatives don't appear in the Anglican church registers perhaps they belonged to a Nonconformist congregation. Registers of ceremonies performed by Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, Quaker, Methodist, Catholic, Unitarian and other dissenting ministers can be searched right back to the mid-1600s on TheGenealogist. Alongside these, you have access to electoral records, directories, school and college registers and a wealth of military collections.

About the author

Laura Berry is a freelance researcher and one of the principal genealogists for the 'Who Do You Think You Are?' TV series. She also assists the MoD and DNA specialists with genealogical research to identify soldiers' remains recovered from WW1 battlefields. Laura has written about family history for many publications and worked on TV shows including 'So You Think You're Royal?' and 'Not Forgotten'.



Elusive ancestors: a search on the 1911 Census for Alfred Marks and wife Marie, whose profession is given as 'militant suffragette'.



The actual image of the Marks family's household schedule further reveals that 'a number of militant suffragettes' were on the premises on census night in 1911.

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Signing up for your free subscription is quick and easy – simply fill in your details at www.TheGenealogist.co.uk/FT3FREE and enter your special voucher code (see bottom of this page).

Using the Master Search to begin to look for an ancestor allows you to search across all record sets simultaneously. Start by entering broad details such as a name and birth date. If this returns too many results then you can refine it by looking within a record set like the census, selecting a county and using keywords.

Case study

In the festive period many of us will be thinking of buying gifts from shops, the founders of whom may still be immortalised in their store's name even today. For example, let us look for John Lewis, a draper born in Shepton Mallet in 1836 and who had moved to London in his twenties to work as a silk buyer at the Peter Robinson Department store at Oxford Circus. To find the right John Lewis we will do a person search and use the keyword 'Silk Mercer'. This immediately locates him within the 1881 Census.

Click on the page icon to see the original document, and press the save button to add the record to an online family tree that you can start to build using TheGenealogist's TreeView. The census results page also features a house icon. Clicking on this reveals a transcription listing everyone present in the household.

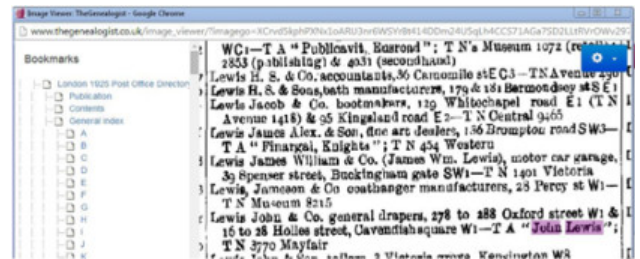
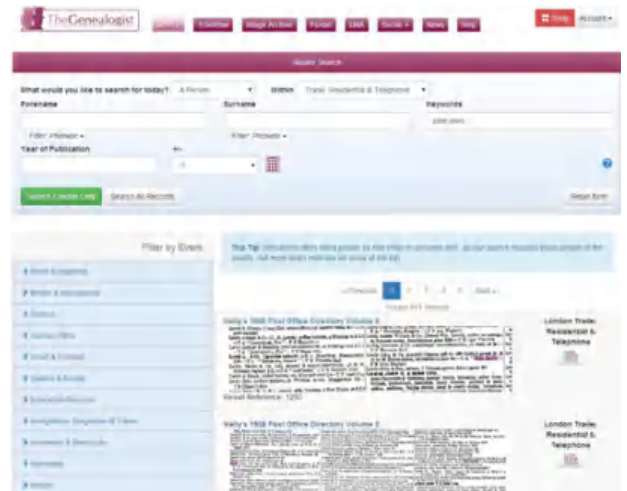
If an ancestor was in business then

the very useful Trade, Residential and Telephone Directories can help us to find addresses that our ancestor occupied. In 1864 John Lewis opened his own small drapery shop, John Lewis & Co, at 132 Oxford Street. This original drapers' shop is now part of the same site as the present-day John Lewis department store on Oxford Street. Lewis's business flourished and expanded and was rebuilt in the 1880s to form an all-encompassing department store. Destroyed in the Blitz, the store was rebuilt in the 1950s.

With a single click we can see the entry on the page of the Post Office Directory and discover that by 1925 the store occupied 278 to 288 Oxford Street W1 and 16 to 28 Holles Street, Cavendish Square W1.

Powerful search tools

TheGenealogist has a large number of databases which can be searched either using the Master Search or individually. Some of the collections are in transcript format and some are in printed book format. From the main Search Page you can use the Master Search to research across all record sets. If you wish to



search a specific record set, however, just scroll down the Search page and you will find all the record sets listed individually on the right hand side.

TheGenealogist website, we have seen, has a number of powerful features that allow you to quickly start building your family tree from scratch, while for more seasoned researchers its unique tools, such as the Master Search and SmartSearch, can be used to home in on elusive forebears, and will help to knock down those brickwalls.

Page 31

The underlined names are those within the household of the

No. of	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	AGE	SEX	Marital Status	Birth Place	Occupation
1	John Lewis	Head	45	M	Married	Shepton Mallet	Silk Merchant
2	Maria Lewis	Wife	51	F	Married	Shepton Mallet	Housewife
3	Hester S. Bramwell	Servant	50	F	Single	Seney, Sussex	Housekeeper
4	Mary Grapes	Servant	23	F	Single	Statham, Norfolk	Housemaid

1881 Census - Census Transcript Search - Google Chrome

www.thegenealogist.co.uk/research/advanced/census/main-household?v=228&h=13902773700000000&county=317&y=1881&household_id=142794&a=Search&h

Census Transcript Household London [Geographically Middlesex] 1881

Address: 7 Harley Place

Parish: Marylebone

Registration District: Marylebone

Image Reference: RD11/0130-P73

Forename	Surname	Age	Year Born	Relation	Birth Place	Occupation
John	Lewis	45	1836	Head	Shepton Mallet	Silk Merchant
Maria	Lewis	51	1830	Sister	Shepton Mallet	No Occupation Income From Interest
Hester S.	Bramwell	50	1831	Servant	Seney, Sussex	Housekeeper
Mary	Grapes	23	1858	Servant	Statham, Norfolk	Housemaid

Found 4 Results

Voucher code

Use this special voucher code at www.TheGenealogist.co.uk/FT3FREE to claim your free 3-month Gold subscription to TheGenealogist (worth £24.95): **894562**. Offer ends 18 February 2016.

Karen Clare picks some Christmas reads for under your tree!

Christmas treats!

Research tricks & tips

My Family History by The Family History Partnership



Get 2016 off to a flying start by making sure you keep track of your research. Independent publisher The Family History Partnership's new 10-generation family research record book with pedigree charts should help you do just that. The book contains 21 handy A4 master

research record forms covering all the main resources, including the index to the General Register Office records of births, marriages and deaths, parish register and census search lists, FamilySearch check sheets, and monumental inscription and wills searches. Maternal entries are featured at one end of the book, which can be flipped over to give you paternal entries at the other, and there is an A1-size pull-out pedigree chart in the centre pages.

A CD containing all the record sheets on pdf is included, so you can print off extras whenever required. Perfect for handing around at Christmas family gatherings! ● RRP £9.99 plus p&p from The Family History Partnership (www.thefamilyhistorypartnership.com) and *Family Tree*'s Family History Bookshop at familyhistorybookshop.co.uk.

Family First: Tracing Relationships in the Past by Ruth Alexandra Symes



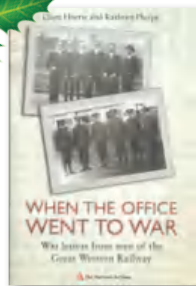
Familiarise yourself with the social context of the times in which your ancestors lived and the relationships they shared with regular *Family Tree* contributor Ruth Symes's latest book. Covering 1800 to 1950, you can read up on such gems as what a typical

fatherhood was like, how first names were chosen for children, and commonly-held ideas about wives and mothers. Not simply a social history, this is also a practical guide to tracing family relationships and

contemporary attitudes, looking behind official and personal records to bring the lives of our forebears into sharper focus. Find out how you might identify an ancestor's missing father or godparents, why (and how) your relative survived multiple pregnancies, and whether your ancestor's position in the 'family pecking order' was significant. There's a rich seam of knowledge and know-how to tap into that should help you put flesh on the bones of the names on your tree, and gain a better understanding of your ancestors' own relationships.

● ISBN: 9781473833883. RRP £19.99 hardback. Pen & Sword History.

World War I When the Office Went to War by Clare Horrie and Kathryn Phelps



Between August 1915 and August 1918 serving members of the audit office for the Great Western Railway wrote hundreds of letters back from the Front to their colleagues and bosses at Paddington. Their letters were arranged in carefully bound folders, each acting as an office 'newsletter', complete with a news section listing those who had written or sent photos, been injured, promoted or killed. It is the newsletters reproduced in this volume that give an unprecedented insight into the war experiences of a close group of colleagues, from all social classes, who were writing to inform and entertain their work mates back home, not just their loved ones. Strong, jokey, formal and, of course, brave voices emerge from the monthly news summaries, but the undercurrents reveal raw insight into the fragility of their situations. The letters stopped abruptly after the Armistice, so the brief biographies provided at the end bring some closure to their stories, brought so remarkably to life by the power of the pen.

● ISBN: 9781844862801. RRP £14.99

hardback. Bloomsbury in association with The National Archives.

I was a Spy! by Marthe McKenna

A great little stocking-filler, this is 'the classic account of behind-the-lines espionage in the First World War', with a foreword by Winston Churchill himself. The memoir, first published in 1932, has been re-issued to mark the centenary of WW1 and when McKenna (née Cnockaert, codename 'Laura') was plucked from waitressing in her parents' cafe in Belgium, to become a spy behind German lines for British Intelligence.

Women can often be overlooked in war history so it's particularly wonderful to see this tale of derring-do and survival (McKenna was caught and faced the firing squad in 1916 before her sentence was commuted to life for her nursing service) back in publication to thrill and inspire newer generations.

● ISBN: 9781910860038. RRP £12.99 hardback. The Pool of London Press.

Vintage adverts

Try it! Buy it! by the British Library

Nowadays we're well used to being 'sold to', enticed to buy the latest gadget or try the newest Nigella recipe, especially at Christmas. Featuring more than 200 vintage adverts printed in fashion magazines, newspapers on posters and trade cards, drawn from the British Library's enviable collection, this colourful little book tells us that commercialism is nothing new. Containing adverts from the early 19th to 20th centuries, there's a big dose of nostalgia too, for those with fond childhood memories of Bird's Custard ('makes children sturdy!') says a 1927 ad) or the 'healthy'



properties of Marmite (1929). Perhaps your relative received one of the 'latest' military toys for the patriotic children of World War I (a model Dreadnought or field gun firing 'quite harmless' rubber shells, 1915), or perhaps your ancestor was lucky enough to have 'The Vertical Feed Sewing Machine, the latest American invention' in 1883? This is an enjoyable pictorial romp through print and social history that is entertaining and informative, but not too taxing on the brain after all that festive indulgence.

● ISBN: 9780712357586. RRP £12.99 hardback. British Library.

Household histories

Get into the Christmas spirit with these two new foodie titles from Amberley – and impress the in-laws at the dinner table...

Dining with the Victorians by Emma Kay

Food was a significant part of our Victorian ancestors' lives – whether they ate gruel in the workhouse, boiled trotters on the street or feasted to excess (and felt guilty about their unhealthy moral values afterwards), Emma

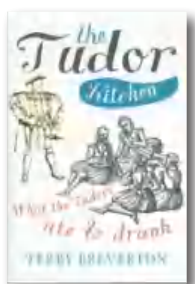
Kay's *Dining with the Victorians* follows deliciously on from her *Dining with the Georgians* (2014), taking us on a culinary tour of 19th-century life.

● ISBN: 9781445646541. RRP £18.99 hardback. Amberley Publishing.



The Tudor Kitchen by Trevor Breverton

Terry Breverton's *The Tudor Kitchen* is equally absorbing, from the extravagant to the everyday recipes of the Tudor rich and poor, gleaned from contemporary sources. Noble households could expect to feed more than 100 people over a meal time, with a menu in one year alone including 8,200 sheep, 2,330 deer and 53 wild boar, along with countless birds such as swan, heron and gull.



Marvel at tales of Henry VIII's hospitality, such as a 12ft fountain dispensing free wine at the Field of the Cloth Gold in 1520; and wonder at the bizarre Sumptuary Laws of 1517, which set out the number of courses different ranks were permitted – nine for cardinals, but three or less for those with no title but £40-£100 annual income. We don't suppose that rule would go down so well on Christmas Day with the rest of the family!

● ISBN: 9781445648743. RRP £20 hardback. Amberley Publishing.

● *Subscribe to Family Tree? Enter our competition to win these two books – see page 45.*

Servants' Stories by Michelle Higgs

Forget the 'Downton' Christmas special, discover real life below stairs as Michelle Higgs (author of *Tracing Your Servant Ancestors* and *A Visitor's Guide to Victorian England*) explores the lot

of the domestic servant between 1800-1950. With stories sourced from oral histories, diaries, autobiographies, letters, memoirs and newspaper reports, the authentic voices of individual servants shine through, while the more general social history chapters place their experiences in context. These are the lesser-known 'warts 'n' all' stories of ordinary folk in service in the smaller homes of the middle classes, which is sure to enhance understanding of your own ancestors' daily lives in domestic service.

● ISBN: 9781473822245. RRP £12.99 paperback. Pen & Sword History.



Memoirs

The Boy from Nowhere by Gregor Fisher with Melanie Reid

Scottish actor Gregor Fisher is perhaps best (and fondly) known to many as comedy character Rab C Nesbitt, but you might wonder why you would want to read his life story. Well, this is no typical 'celebrity' autobiography but instead it is a family history tale with twists and turns, as Gregor's past unravels and truths unfold after decades in the dark. Growing up just outside Glasgow in the 1950s, at 14

Gregor discovered he was adopted. After a lifetime of trying to trace his background, he approached *Times* columnist Melanie Reid in 2014 for help. What emerges is a tragic, touching and funny tale in which one of Scotland's national treasures finally finds out who he is and where he came from.

● ISBN: 9780008150433. RRP £18.99 hardback. HarperCollins.



Constance Street by Charlie Connelly

Indulge yourself in more memoir with the story of one street in Silvertown, in the East End of London, through the era of both world wars. Featuring the true-life tales of 12 working-class women, *Constance Street* also tells of the Silvertown munitions factory disaster of 1917, when the author's great-grandmother, Nellie Greenwood (whose baby daughter survived being thrown from her crib in the blast), opened her laundry as a field hospital to tend the injured, with the help of the women on the street. Following his family's story through the Great War, roaring Twenties, the Depression and the outbreak of World War II, Charlie Connelly vividly brings to life the unbreakable bonds of love, hardship and fortitude that held this close-knit community together.

● ISBN: 9780007528455. RRP £7.99 paperback. HarperCollins.





ANCESTORS AT YULETIDE



The spice of life

Ruth A Symes takes a delicious look at the history of the humble Christmas pudding and its place of honour on our ancestors' dinner tables.



A family sit around a table eating their Christmas meal and greet the arrival of the plum pudding, which is being carried in on a large tray.
(Reproduction after Cecil Aldin.)

©Cecil Aldin
1901



Christmas pudding history



Plum pudding was very likely to be found on the Christmas tables of most of our families throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. With its stodge and fruit, it represented the warmth and wholesomeness of British culinary tradition. But, the secret to its huge appeal probably lay in three of its more unusual elements: its spices (a nod to the perceived exoticism of the British Empire), the likelihood it contained alcohol (rum or brandy were popular additions in non-teetotal households), and the silver coins or charms that might have been

stirred into the mixture (guaranteed to provide a happy diversion on Christmas Day).

Puddings for all classes

Even if times were hard, it seems, our ancestors rarely missed out on their pudding at Christmas time. Families scrimped and saved for ingredients with one mid-Victorian newspaper commenting that a poor woman might be seen on Christmas Eve, 'standing outside a pawnbroker's shop, with three flat irons, an ancient engraving figurative of a harvest-home, and her husband's Sunday waistcoat, all

of which goods and chattels she is prepared to make over to the usurer by way of mortgage, that she may obtain the needful purchase money for the ingredients of her Christmas pudding'. (*The Falkirk Herald*, 29 December 1853, quoting *The Times* of the same week.)

Pudding even turned up on the Christmas table of otherwise cheerless institutions in the 19th century, provoking the same journalist to quip that, 'we shut a man and his wife up in the workhouse, carefully separating them for twelve months, but on Christmas Day, we give to each of them a large wedge of plum pudding, as a set off against the discomfort of the year.'

Meanwhile, in private business and on large estates, plum pudding was the gift of choice by many employers to their workforces. *The Nottingham Review and General Advertiser* of 30 December 1831 was typical in its commendation of a local businessman: 'William Brodhurst Esq of Newark...[who] on Monday, regaled the whole of his workmen and their wives with plenty of roast beef and plum pudding.' And this benevolent distribution of pudding was exemplified by Queen Victoria, who always handed out pudding to the tenants of her estate at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight on Christmas Eve: 'The names of the children were read out, each child receiving a present, and there was great fun as they bowed and curtsied very funnily, the schoolmaster keeping each one back to see they did it properly. They came by three times, first for their presents, then for the pieces of plum pudding and lastly for the ornaments cut off the tree. Then a few of the men and women off the estate came by for plum pudding.' (Tuesday 24 December 1867, Queen Victoria's journals.)

So popular was the Christmas pudding that by the end of the 19th century the total amount of ingredients used nationwide were humorously calculated as follows: 'We think that we are well within the mark when we state that in this country alone, 4,000,000 puddings are prepared for Christmas day, each of which will average 4 ¼ lbs in weight. The national plum pudding,





ANCESTORS AT YULETIDE



An advert for Borwick's Baking Powder showing Father Christmas carrying a large Christmas pudding, c1900. The head of Father Christmas is movable.

a new recipe, devised at short notice by the Empire Marketing Board, included minced apple from Canada, demerara sugar from the West Indies, eggs from the Irish Free State, cinnamon from Ceylon, cloves from Zanzibar and brandy from Cyprus!

... & the military

In 1853, *The Times* reported that 'the soldiers and sailors of Queen Victoria eat their Christmas pudding to a man; it is the necessary condition of our national safety.'

And pudding – reassuring, patriotic and sustaining – continued to be associated with the military throughout the following century.

In the First World War, Christmas

pudding was an important constituent in Christmas parcels sent to the troops since its associations with home were considered to boost morale. Up and down the country, local newspapers organised campaigns to send tinned pudding to troops that had been recruited from their area. In some cases, these wartime plum puddings might even provide an unusual way back into finding your ancestors. This is because when individual soldiers wrote in thanks for their puddings, their letters sometimes appeared in local newspapers. A letter to *The Burton Daily Mail* of 21 February 1917 from GR Ford, Shoeing Smith, Royal Field Artillery of 93 Waterloo Street, Burton, for example, sums up his delight with his gift: 'I now take the pleasure of acknowledging receipt of your most welcome Christmas pudding, which I was so pleased to receive. I and my friends enjoyed the

Look online
 • britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk and findmypast.co.uk – British Newspaper Archive collection;
 • queenvictoriasjournals.org – Queen Victoria's Journals online.

therefore, weighs just about 7,589 tons; to compose it you must take 2,628 tons of raisins, 892 tons of currants and the same quantity of mixed peel, of breadcrumbs and suet 1,339 tons each, some 500,000 pints of brandy and 32,000,000 eggs.' (*Edinburgh Evening News*, 14 December 1898.)

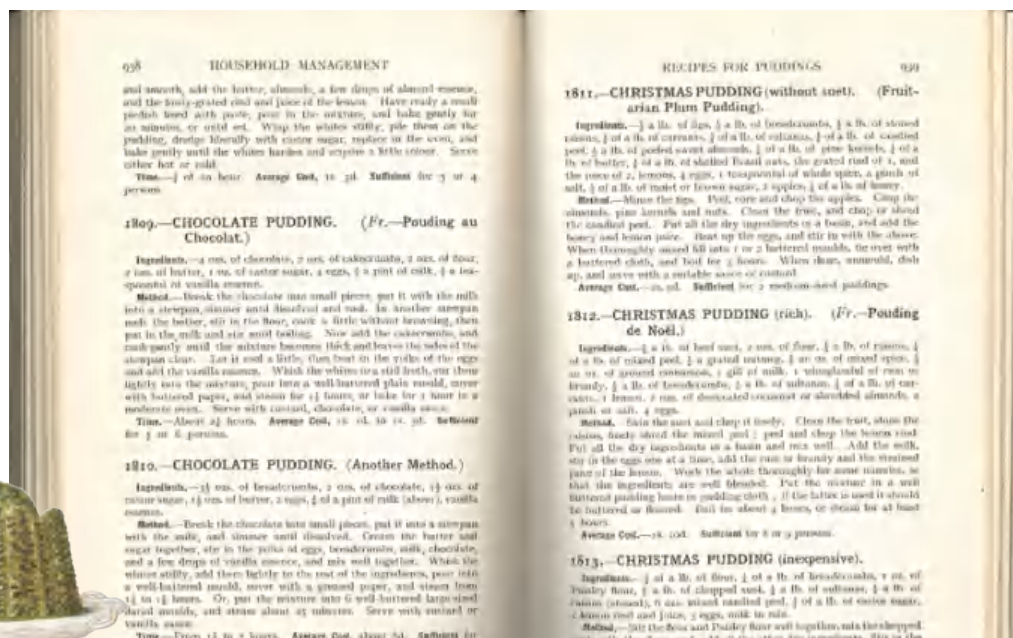
For the empire...

By the last decade of the 19th century, even if your ancestors worked or served overseas, they might still have enjoyed a traditional Christmas pudding. As the epitome of Britishness – and because they had a long shelf-life – thousands of tins of pudding were sent out to the colonies of the empire, particularly India and Australia, by relatives and friends.

In the late 1920s, there was another twist to the idea of imperial pudding. At a food exhibition at Olympia in 1926, Princess Marie-Louise came up with the idea of making an imperial pudding using ingredients from around the empire. The first suggested recipe included Canadian flour, Australian or South African raisins, Australian sultanas, Australian currants, English or Scottish beef suet, Indian pudding spice and Jamaican rum. So far so good but, in fact, the recipe sparked fury from those countries, such as New Zealand, which had either not been represented at all or which had, like India, been underrepresented in terms of ingredients. To rectify this,

For rich and poor: 'Members of the United Cooks' Society preparing a monster plum pudding at Marylebone Workhouse for the Lancashire operatives' in this 1863 illustration from *The Illustrated London News*.

Some Christmas pudding recipes from Mrs Beeton's *Book of Household Management*.



Burton Daily Mail 21 February 1917

Page 4 of 4 Article: CHRISTMAS PUDDINGS.



Letters of thanks in February 1917 by soldiers who had received Christmas puddings from readers of the *Burton Daily Mail*, available in the British newspapers collection at Findmypast.co.uk.

Below: The *Liverpool Daily Post* of 26 December 1864 detailed the ingredients – including 240 eggs – for the Christmas pudding to be enjoyed ‘without limitation’ by the 660 inmates of West Derby Workhouse.

findmypast: Family tree Search 1939 Register My records News Help

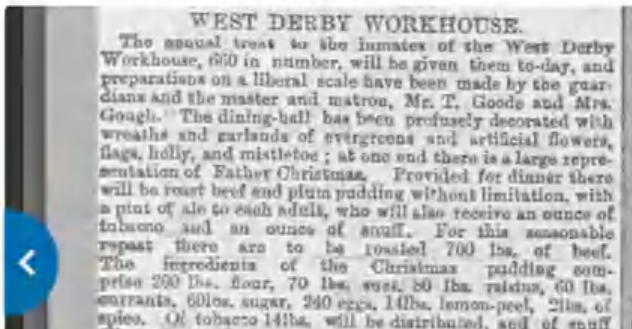
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Back to Search Results

Liverpool Daily Post 26 December 1864

Page 5 of 8 Article: CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES.



looked) the same for each generation of our ancestors.

The common adulteration of flour in the 1860s, for example, meant that some mid-Victorian puddings were pretty tasteless. And other intermittent historical factors also affected the composition of puddings. In 1922, a disaster abroad caused the following startling headline to appear in many British newspapers: ‘CHRISTMAS PUDDING MAY HAVE TO BE MADE WITHOUT RAISINS!’ The source of the problem was a huge fire that had devastated the commercial centre of the port town of Smyrna (located in present-day Turkey), ruining the entire 80,000-100,000 tonnes of raisins for export. Mr McVittie, honorary secretary of the British Chamber of Commerce in the town, commented: ‘English Christmas puddings will have to be made without raisins this year, unless people can afford to pay fabulous prices for them.

Christmas pudding history

Read up on it

- *Christmas: A Social History* by Mark Connelly (IB Tauris, reprint, 2012);
- *The History of Christmas Food and Feast* by Claire Hopley (Remember When, 2009);
- *All Things Christmas: The History and Traditions of Advent and Christmas* by EG Lewis (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012);
- *Christmas Customs and Traditions: Their History and Significance* by Clement A Miles (Dover Publications, 1976);
- *The King's Christmas Pudding: Globalization, Recipes, and the Commodities of Empire* by Kaori O'Connor (Journal of Global History, Vol 4, 2009, pp127-155).

pudding so much.’

The stirring of the Christmas pudding continued to be a much celebrated ritual on all HMS ships and at Naval establishments long after the end of both world wars. In 1952, with rationing still uppermost in the minds of many, the ‘mammoth’ puddings made at *HMS Condor*, at Arbroath in Scotland, attracted particular attention in the press. Weighing in at 40lb in total and using 130 eggs, these puddings also included 160 specially sterilised silver three-penny bits, rather than coins made from cupro-nickel (which when mixed with fruit were deemed to produce an unpleasant taste). Sailors who served at the station received an 8oz portion of pudding, and the names of those few chosen to stir the enormous barrels of mixture with ‘carley raft paddles’, appeared in local newspapers.

A recipe in flux

It's fun to imagine that – on some sensory and emotional level – you will in some way be ‘connecting’ with your ancestors when you taste your pudding this Christmas. But recipes for plum puddings have suffered some variation over the decades and have certainly not tasted (nor indeed

A result of the fire was a rise today in the price of currants from Greece.’ (*Portsmouth Evening News*, 16 September 1922.)

In the years of the Second World War, few Christmas puddings were made at home because of rationing. Keen to keep up the tradition and for it not to become a treat only for the very rich, The Ministry of Food, with the voluntary agreement of food manufacturers, introduced standardisation of sizes and prices for Christmas puddings within and without basins. In 1943, the prices of these standardised puddings ranged from 1 shilling 7½d for 2lb puddings without basins to 7 shillings for 4lb puddings in basins (reported in *The Gloucester Citizen*, 15 December 1942).

The making of the annual Christmas pudding might have tested the ingenuity and stretched the resources of our ancestors over the years but it was a part of the festivities that they would rarely have done without, for after all, as *The Times* put it on 29 December 1853, ‘This savoury compound... is the very foundation of Anglo-Saxon civilization’.

About the author

Ruth A Symes is the author of *Family First: Tracing Relationships in the Past*, which has just been published by Pen & Sword History.





William the Conqueror is regarded as the founding ancestor of the British royal family – though of course ancestral royal lines go back much further. On the Bayeux Tapestry (England, 11th century), William is depicted between his half brothers Odo (left) and Robert (right).

The backbone of genealogy

Of all the family trees in the world, one of the best known, best researched, best proven is that of our own royal family. **Anthony Adolph** delves deeply into royal genealogy.

Unlike most other family trees, which have been traced back retrospectively using historical records, the British royal family's pedigree has been a matter of constant fact ever since William's arrival at Hastings in 1066. He and his wife Matilda already had a son, the ill-fated William Rufus, and within two years of their arrival the future Henry I was born, so the identity of his sons was a matter of common knowledge. In other societies and at other times, this contemporary general knowledge of who was who may eventually have been lost, or become garbled (Henry I succeeded William Rufus, so later genealogies may have assumed he was his son, not his younger brother). But the Normans were an obsessively bureaucratic race. The chief means of record-keeping were chronicles, compiled for the most part by monks: no less than nine chronicles, including those of Ordericus Vitalis and William of Malmesbury, date from the reigns of the first two Williams. From Henry I's reign we have three, including Henry of Huntingdon's, and the habit continued throughout the Middle Ages during which period royal family trees were also drawn, both to compliment rulers and to intimidate their enemies. Following the style developed by Giovanni Boccaccio (died 1375), each ruler's face was shown in a circle, connected by one line to his father and, by a series of radiating lines, to his sons, a style that so resembled the imprint of a crane's foot in mud that such diagrams were termed *pied de gru*, 'crane's foot' charts – hence the term 'pedigree'.

All sorts of records

Elsewhere, all such wonderful records may have been lost, but despite all our civil wars, fires, rats, and damp, enough of these records have remained safe to preserve this collective knowledge of the royal pedigree. Thus we know in intense detail about the succession dispute between Henry I's daughter Matilda and his sister Adela's son Stephen of Blois and how eventually Matilda's son Henry Plantagenet became Henry II. The succession of Plantagenet kings is well-chronicled, including the death

Henry I of England being enthroned, from the illuminated *Chronica Majora* by Matthew Paris (1236-1259) British Library MS Cotton Claudius D vi, f9.



of Henry's childless son Richard I and the succession of Richard's brother John, the ancestor of all those who came after – Henry III, then three Edwards. The complex machinations and claims to the throne of Edward III's descendants during the Wars of the Roses are known in detail, as is the conclusion, when Henry Tudor defeated his cousin Richard III at Bosworth in 1485, became Henry VII, and married Elizabeth, daughter of Richard's late brother Edward IV.

From Tudor times onwards, the volume of material recording the births, marriages, deaths, successions and coronations of the royal family has only increased. We can follow the succession down from Henry VII to his son Henry VIII with his six wives and three childless children, Edward

VI, Mary and Elizabeth, and we know in detail how the throne then passed to Elizabeth's nearest cousin James VI Stuart of Scotland, whose great-grandmother was Henry VII's daughter Margaret, and who became James I of England.

Then comes that most troubled period, chronicled in minute detail by the records of Parliament and numerous independent diaries and letters, when James's son Charles I quarrelled with Parliament and lost his head, but his son Charles II was restored in 1660. He died without legitimate heirs, leaving a Catholic brother, James II, who was overthrown in the Glorious Revolution in 1688, with the throne going to James's Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband (also



first cousin) William of Orange. They died childless, so the throne passed first to Mary's sister Anne, who also died childless. The nearest heirs, the descendants of Charles II's sister Henrietta Anne, were Catholics, so Parliament ruled that the throne must pass instead to the closest Protestant heir, which happened to be George of Hanover, grandson of James I's daughter Elizabeth; he became George I. Three Georges later, George IV died without legitimate offspring, as did his brother William IV (though David Cameron descends from one of William's illegitimate offspring), so the throne went to their niece Victoria, whose son Edward VII was the father of George V. His son George VI was the father of our own queen.

Collateral lines

This not-entirely undisputed line of succession leads to lots of other genealogical lines with some claim or other to be the 'rightful' rulers of Britain, had things turned out differently. The Duke of Beaufort has an unbroken genealogical male-line descent from Edward III's son John of Gaunt, and through female-lines there are innumerable descendants of the Plantagenet kings – myself included – many of us being more senior in strict terms of succession than the descendants of Elizabeth Plantagenet

and Henry Tudor (only our ancestor didn't win the Battle of Bosworth, so any claims we might care to make to the throne would be entirely hypothetical). The settlement of 1688 resulted in a bristling family tree of French and German descendants of Henrietta Anne Stuart, who would be kings now had their ancestors not been Catholics: Franz, Duke of Bavaria is the senior heir of this line but, like the Duke of Beaufort, he makes no comment on his purely theoretical claim to the throne. James II's exiled descendants died out, but despite that various characters have claimed to be his heirs: the recent claims of Count Pininski to a direct descent from James II were challenged robustly by Marie-Louise Backhurst in 2013 in *The Society of Genealogists' Genealogists' Magazine* (vol 31, no 2, 45-49).

Earlier ancestors

Beyond the central, certain stem of the royal family tree, the genealogy of the royals becomes less certain and more open to interpretation. Still, the main lines back are generally well

recorded. Thanks to the Normans' own chronicles, we know William the Conqueror's male-line back to his 3x great-grandfather Hrólfr, the Viking founder of Normandy. The Anglo-Saxon genealogies were recorded in detail in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* and Nennius's *Historia Brittonum*, and the Royal Family gained a descent from them when Henry I married

Genealogical roll of the kings of England. (British Library, K90048-11 Royal 14 B.VI, membrane 5 Shelfmark Royal 14 B.VI.)

A close up of one of the rolls.





Matilda of Scotland, whose mother St Margaret was the granddaughter of the English king Edmund II Ironside. Medieval Scots chronicles record the Stuarts' descent from the earlier kings of Scotland in detail too.

Ireland and Wales became part of Great Britain by conquest, not by succession, so the genealogies of their rulers were not integral components of the royal family tree, but the original Kings of Scots were descended from the earlier Irish High Kings, and over the centuries descendants of the Welsh kings have married into the royal line too.

The funeral cortège of Richard III making its way through Leicester on 22 March 2015, seen from where Anthony was standing with a crew from Channel 4, among the excited crowds. The rediscovery of Richard's bones, their identification by finding a female-line genetic match with a known female-line descendant of his sister's, and his subsequent reburial in Leicester Cathedral attracted worldwide media attention and stimulated a renewed fascination in the convoluted family tree of the Wars of the Roses.



Matilda, wife of William the Conqueror. (British Library D VII 067630 Cotton Nero D VII, f7, Golden Book of St Albans.)

Henry Tudor's claim to royal Welsh ancestry was mere bluster, rubber-stamped by genealogists fearful of the consequences if they did not but, earlier on, Llewellyn the Great (died 1240) married four of his daughters to powerful English lords, including Ralph Mortimer, hoping thus to secure the borders of his beleaguered Welsh realm. Llewellyn's plan failed, but his blood coursed through his English descendants, particularly down the Mortimer line: his descendant Anne Mortimer was the mother of Richard, Duke of York, whose sons were Richard III and Edward IV. Llewellyn's royal Welsh ancestry was impeccably recorded in genealogical manuscripts (all conveniently collated in Peter Bartrum's 1966 *Early Welsh Genealogical Tracts*). His line goes back to Welsh kings who claimed descent from the *wledigs*, the warlords who tried to keep the peace after the collapse of the Roman Empire, and several of them in turn claimed descent from Cassivellaunus, the native British king who had led the first resistance to





Caesar. Cassivellaunus, said the Welsh bards, was descended from Brutus of Troy, who was said to have come to Britain, killed the giants who lived here and founded London as the new Troy in the west, as recounted in Geoffrey of Monmouth's imaginative *History of the Kings of Britain*. Brutus was imagined as the great-grandson of Aeneas of Troy, the hero of Virgil's *Aeneid*, who was in turn the son of Anchises and the love-goddess Aphrodite, while Anchises could be traced back through the Trojan kings (as detailed in Homer's *Iliad*) to the progeny (according to Nennius) of Noah, descendant of Adam and Eve. These colourful early links owed much to monkish imagining, but they are intensely revealing of the Dark Age mind-sets from which they emerged and were necessary links in

the Genealogy of Salvation, which linked our British ancestors back to the Bible and thus to the core of their religious beliefs.

Tracing the earlier real ancestors of the Plantagenets and the royal family's other noble French forebears, meanwhile, is the subject of ongoing research by prosopographers, most notably Christian Settapani, who try to piece together ever earlier generations using whatever original records have survived from the Dark Ages. Through female-lines, the royal family also has numerous descents from foreign royal dynasties, whose own earlier descents, as mapped by the late Sir Anthony Wagner (in *Pedigree and Progress*, 1975), is the ongoing work of Don Stone (www.donstonetech.com). Needless to say, the internet is awash with false and unproven connections, so recourse to reliable sources is essential.

Aside from their extremely well-documented royal lines, the modern royals have

many non-royal lines of ancestry. The titled male-line ancestries of the Queen Mother and Princess Diana were already recorded in *Burke's Peerage* but, like almost the entire ancestry of the Duchess of Cambridge, they had non-noble lines that needed tracing just like everyone else's, and of course they share those non-royal ancestors with many other people. My own contribution was proving the Duchess of Cambridge's descent from the landed gentry Fairfaxes of Yorkshire, as detailed at anthonyadolph.co.uk/princess-catherine.

Crooked lines

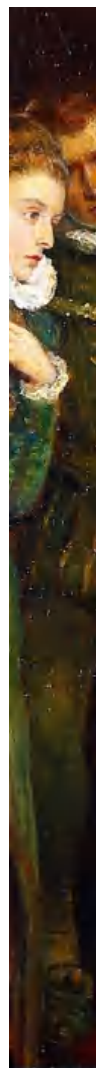
At every generation of the royal family tree the possibilities for illegitimacy and subterfuge were legion. Chris Given-Wilson and Alice Curteis's *The Royal Bastards of Medieval England* (1984) and Peter Beauclerk-Dewar and Roger Powell's *Right Royal Bastards: The Fruits of Passion* (2006) present the evidence for illegitimate offspring (some children were openly



Richard III and the future Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth in 1485, from an engraving made in 1857.



Charles II.



The tomb effigies of Henry II and Eleanor of Aquitaine in the abbey of Fontevraud, France. Henry's father's family were Counts of Anjou and thus the English kings retained vast estates in France throughout the Middle Ages.



acknowledged, and for others there is persuasive circumstantial evidence). Even with legitimate lines, 'facts' can be questioned. In my book *The King's Henchman* (2012) I argued that the closeness of Queen Henrietta Maria to her confidant Henry Jermyn could mean that he, and not her husband Charles I, was the real father of Charles II. Genetic tests on Richard III's bones should have showed him to be an exact male-line match of the present Duke of Beaufort, but they didn't. The press instantly assumed that the genetic break had taken place in the immediate male-line ancestry of Richard III, so branded the whole modern royal family (who are descended from Richard's sister) 'illegitimate', but the break is far likelier to have taken place in the line leading down to the present duke, spoiling his claim of an unbroken male-line back to the Plantagenets, but leaving the royal family's ancestry

unaffected. A more serious issue is the fact that, although Queen Victoria passed haemophilia down to some of her descendants, none of her apparent ancestors suffered from it, suggesting that her real father may have been someone other than her mother's husband, the Duke of Kent – unless her carrying of haemophilia was due to a freak mutation at her conception.

But despite the uncertainties raised by scholarly probings, the royal family's ancestry remains one of the best-recorded in the world. In all cases, two facts remain paramount: a child born to married parents is their legal offspring regardless of biological niceties, and once a monarch is crowned as the successor to the last, that succession does not become invalidated by subsequent scholarly discoveries about the previous monarch's antecedents: we genealogists can speculate all we like about details in the royal family tree,

but the Queen's right to the throne, in succession to her father, remains, legally as well as morally, unaltered.

If you can trace any of your lines back to the upper classes, you may well find a line that snakes back through the younger children of dukes to ancestors descended, one way or another, from royalty. Any of us who can prove a legitimate line back has a place in the line of succession: actually, if it were possible for everyone in Britain to trace every single ancestor over the last thousand years then we'd probably *all* find descents from William the Conqueror and thus know our place in the royal line of succession. The royal family tree is not just an aide to classroom history teaching. It is, one way or another, the backbone of all of British genealogy. 🌿

Queen Elizabeth I and her court watching John Dee performing an experiment.



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About the author

Anthony Adolph is a professional genealogist (www.anthoniyadolph.co.uk) and author of books including *Tracing Your Aristocratic Ancestors* and *Brutus of Troy and the Quest for the Ancestry of the British*. His latest book *In Search of Our Ancient Ancestors: From the Big Bang to Modern Britain, in Science and Myth* is published by Pen and Sword.



How far are you related to royalty?

When faced with a family rumour that we're descended from royalty, maybe we should not be so quick to pooh-pooh it. **Richard Morgan** weighs up the odds of finding that blue blood.

The number of our ancestors doubles at each generation, so we all have two parents and most of us have four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, etc. A quick calculation suggests that going back to about the year 1500 (ie some 15 generations back) each of us might have had some 32,768 ancestors. Yet the population studies of that time estimate there were between 2 and 3 million – perhaps 2.25 million – people in England and Wales, and about 750,000 in each of Scotland and Ireland – say 3,750,000 for the whole of the British Isles, though estimates do vary. This roughly suggests, however, that most of us might each be descended from approximately one per cent of everyone alive in 1500. Can this really be so?

Two factors are needed to correct this view. First, for those of us with immigrant ancestors – such as Huguenots from France in the 1700s, Germans in the 19th century, Jewish, or Commonwealth ancestors – some or even all of these ancestors would have been abroad.

The other factor that reduces the score substantially is the marriage of cousins. A marriage between

first cousins reduces the number of their children's great-grandparents from eight to six, with proportionate diminution of all ancestors going back. It has to be the case that for families domiciled in the UK over many centuries, there are likely to have been several marriages of cousins over the years. It must also be expected that a good many of the potential partners would always be relatives in the same or a neighbouring village.

The most extreme case of marriages of cousins in successive generations that I know of is in the ancestry of Carlos II of Spain. Philip I and his queen Joan 'the Mad' of Spain occur eight separate times in Carlos's ancestry.

It must be the case that, except for recent immigrants, all of us are related to each other if you go back far enough, and of course DNA analysis throws up many common ancestors – even if the connection is not always traceable.

As it happens an eccentric genealogist born Melville Amadeus Henry Douglas Heddle de la Caillemotte de Massue de Ruvigny, but calling himself the Marquis de Ruvigny, made an attempt to quantify one particular line of ancient English

ancestors up to the beginning of the 20th century. Ruvigny himself was born in England and his father's claim to be a French marquis was to say the least problematical. He was apparently of Irish descent though the family had lived in France for a while.

Ruvigny published several books on genealogy. These days he is best known for his five volumes of *The Roll of Honour*, which aimed to provide biographies of all those killed in the First World War. He completed only 26,768 biographies, but they are available on Ancestry, Findmypast, TheGenealogist and GenesReunited.

However, arguably Ruvigny's most important work was *The Plantagenet Roll of the Blood Royal*, issued in five large volumes in 1903-1911. Its purpose was to list everyone who might be descended from the Plantagenet and Tudor kings of England, as well as the kings of Scotland. Ruvigny was an ardent Jacobite who refused to recognise the accession of the Hanoverians in 1714, so this gave him an excuse to ignore the relatively few descents from more recent monarchs. Each volume takes a different 'gateway' ancestor and lists their descendants.

Ruvigny's first 'Tudor' volume published in 1903 described the descents from Edward IV and Henry VII of England, and James III of Scotland, endeavouring to list every single person he could find who could claim the relevant descent. The volume contains some 133 family trees, followed by lists of people then alive or only very recently dead in order of primogeniture – that is to say, the order in which each such person might accede to the throne in the



Find part 1 of De Ruvigny's *The Plantagenet Roll of the Blood Royal* on Archive.org.

unlikely event of a total extinction of the present royal family and all others having a better title to the crown. This arrangement conveniently put the Jacobite pretenders at the head of the list well ahead of Queen Victoria and Edward VII. The volume takes 565 pages to deal with nearly 12,000 possible descendants and there is also a detailed index.

This was followed by four volumes dealing with some of the descendants of Edward III:

- 18,000 descendants from George Duke of Clarence, brother of Edward IV, published 1905,
- 25,500 descendants from their sister Anne Duchess of Exeter, published 1906,
- 18,000 descendants from Isabel

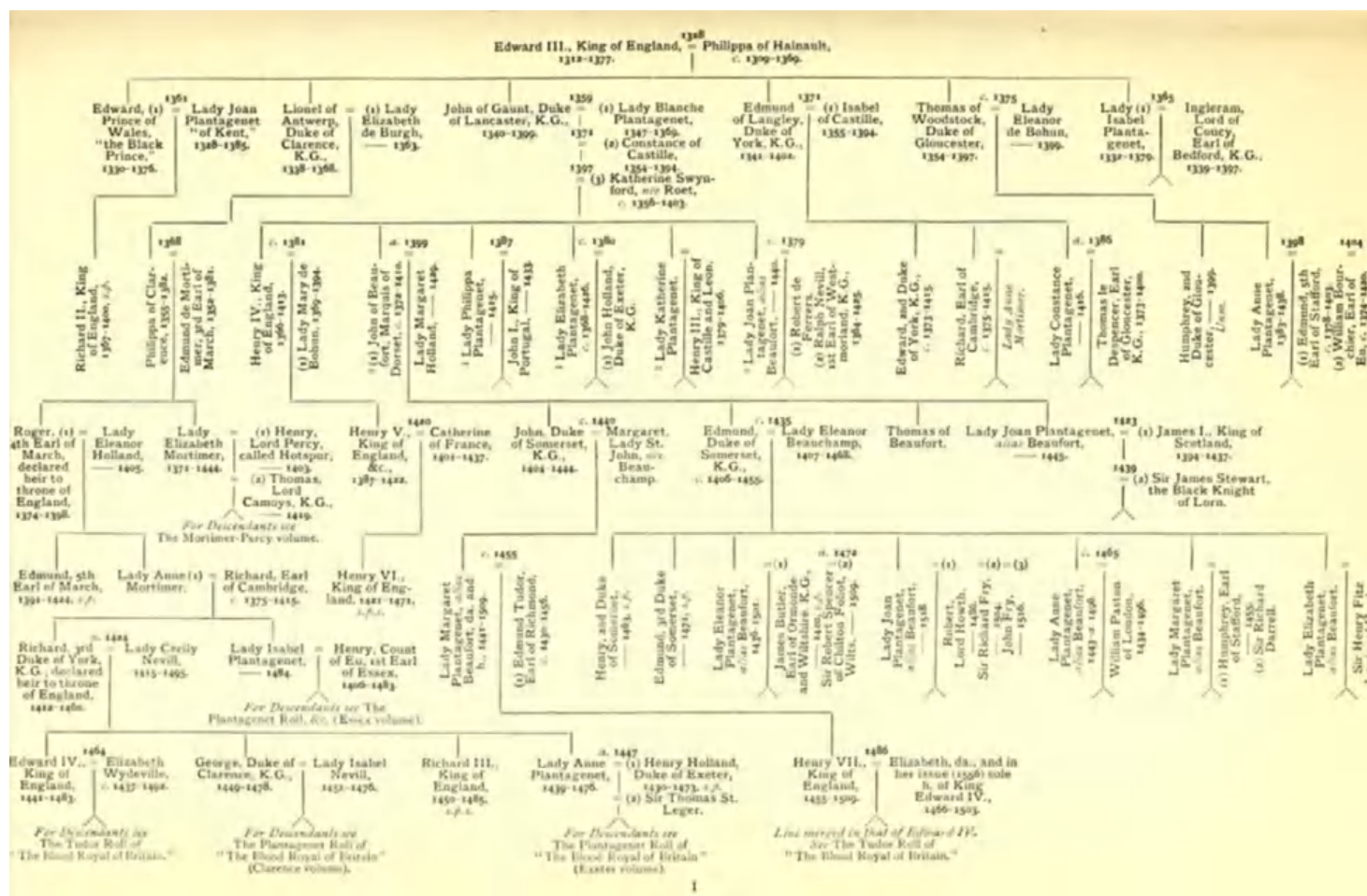
Countess of Essex and Eu who was aunt of the Duke of Clarence, published 1908, and

● 30,000 descendants from Lady Elizabeth Mortimer wife of Harry Hotspur – she was great-aunt of the Lady Essex 1911. This last volume is labelled ominously Part I. (No Part II was ever published though the Society of Genealogists has a typescript which appears to be the first 190 pages of Part II.)

It will be seen that each volume starts further back. Apart from finishing off the Mortimer-Percy line, there still remain several other branches that were never tackled, such as the numerous descendants of Edward III's sons John Duke of Lancaster and Edmund Duke of York

and their less well-known siblings Thomas of Woodstock and Isabel Countess of Bedford. At first glance this looks like four or five more volumes, but intermarriage with cousins means that many of these people have already been dealt with in previous volumes. Even so, Ruvigny estimated the descendants of Edward III at 300,000.

It is to be noted that there are many descendants of British royalty who are entirely missed in Ruvigny's system either because their royal ancestor was much more recent than any he wrote about, or by reason of illegitimacy, or both (I am thinking here of the children of Charles II and William IV). There are also people descended from much earlier monarchs. For



example, Edward I had two daughters, Joan and Elizabeth, who married Englishmen: the Earl of Gloucester and the Earl of Hereford respectively, and it seems their progeny survive.

You might think that such descendants would be confined to the aristocracy. Some of course were, but there are still a surprising number who are ordinary people with no pretensions to any kind of wealth or title. Sir Anthony Wagner in his famous book, *English Genealogy*, shows a fascinating pedigree of a Salisbury innkeeper called Ferdinando

Bainton, who was living in 1623. His grandfather, Sir William Cavendish, was the ancestor of four dukedoms – those of Devonshire, Newcastle, Portland and Kingston (five if you include the Dukedom of Norfolk through the female line) – and also father of James I's aunt Elizabeth Cavendish. This neatly illustrates the comparative social mobility of early 17th century England.

By the 20th century the decline and fall of many families has become commonplace. My grandfather, John William Brooks, who was a mere commercial traveller selling household polish in Ramsgate, nevertheless has his place in Ruvigny as descendant on claim no 7,440 – which means that he had only to get rid of 7,439 people with a better claim and he would have become King John II. The population of Britain in 1903 when Ruvigny wrote was about half what it is today. Some of the increase since then is from immigration, but much is not.

If Ruvigny is right that Edward III

Descendants of Edward III and Philippa of Hainault, as outlined by De Ruvigny.

had some 300,000 descendants alive in 1911, then there are probably at least half a million descendants alive today, and perhaps more. If we widen the scope to all the other monarchs that Ruvigny did not deal with, I suspect the figure comes to at least 600,000 people.

I am prepared to bet several of them are readers of *Family Tree*. Do let us know if you are!

Find out more

- Search part of De Ruvigny's work on the Plantagenet royal blood line at search.ancestry.co.uk/search/db.aspx?dbid=6552.
- Printed copies of all five volumes of De Ruvigny's *The Plantagenet Roll of the Blood Royal* are available from Genealogical.com.

About the author

Richard Morgan is editor of two diaries, *The Diary of a Bedfordshire Squire* (Beds Historical Record Society, vol 66, 1987) and *The Diary of an Indian Cavalry Officer* (Pagoda Tree Press, 2003), and also *Life Runneth as the Brooks – the Brooks family in Bedfordshire* (Pagoda Tree Press, 2011) and *British Ships in Indian Waters* (www.fibis.org, 2012).

He has written several articles on Indian and other history, and is also the author of books on IT Law.



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Stumbling upon a 19th-century report of a troubled musician's untimely death at a popular tourist spot, **Anna Maria Barry** felt impelled to delve further into newspapers to trace his forgotten story. In doing so, she also gained a vivid insight into life and death in Victorian London...



The Duke of York Column in Waterloo Place, off The Mall, where Henri Stephan plunged to his death in 1850.

Cold case

At approximately 10.15am on 14 May 1850, a French man named Henri Stephan wandered up to the Duke of York Column, situated between St James' Park and The Mall. Stephan was a musician, employed as a horn player at London's Italian Opera House (Her Majesty's Theatre). He greeted the uncomprehending attendant in French, before paying the 6d entrance fee and climbing the stairs to the top. From the summit he admired far-reaching views of the Victorian metropolis, circling the viewing platform several times. After 15 minutes he climbed over the iron railings and threw himself 280ft to his death.

The value of newspapers

One of the great pleasures of researching the 19th century is working with newspapers. Many of these are available online, in searchable databases containing

hundreds of papers and periodicals from all corners of the country. A glance over any publication from this period will offer a fascinating glimpse into 19th-century life. News reports, portraits of celebrities, reviews of entertainments, adverts for new inventions: they bring the Victorian city vividly to life. In fact, when working with these sources, it is very easy to get side-tracked by some tantalising story in faded print. It was in exactly this way that I first stumbled upon the sad story of Henri Stephan.

I am writing a PhD on 19th-century opera singers, and was searching a newspaper database for reports from London's Italian Opera House. Instead, I came across the sad story of Stephan's suicide, which was easily as dramatic as anything to be found on the operatic stage. Becoming intrigued, I pursued his story through the pages of various newspapers. Through reports on his suicide and the resulting inquest, I was able to

discover more about Stephan's life and the sad circumstances of his death. His forgotten story offers a fascinating insight into life and death in Victorian London, while also demonstrating how researchers might make use of digitised 19th-century news sources.

Databases of 19th-century newspapers and periodicals are now widely available through public libraries. Those with a subscription to Findmypast.co.uk or the British Newspaper Archive (www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk) can also access a growing number of newspapers from the British Library's newspaper collection online. These databases offer sophisticated search functions, allowing you to search by keyword and within specified date ranges. It is even possible to search newspapers from particular geographic areas, which is especially useful if you are looking for reports in the regional press. Using these databases I was able to search Henri



Stephan's name in newspapers from 1850. Instantly, I was presented with dozens of reports on his death.

Crucial details

In Victorian Britain, newspapers served as a form of entertainment as well as a source of news. In an age before photography, colourful and descriptive language was often employed to bring reports vividly to life. Gory details of murders and suicides sold newspapers. Judith Flanders describes this sort of reporting in her excellent book *The Invention of Murder* (HarperPress, 2011). Reports of Stephan's suicide consequently include a level of detail that is surprising and even distasteful to a 21st-century reader. In a typical report, *The Standard* described Stephan's death: 'The doors [of the monument] had scarcely been opened

Benjamin Lumley ran Her Majesty's Theatre, where Stephan was a horn player. This portrait appears in Lumley's book of memoirs, *Reminiscences of the Opera* (1864, digitised at archive.org).

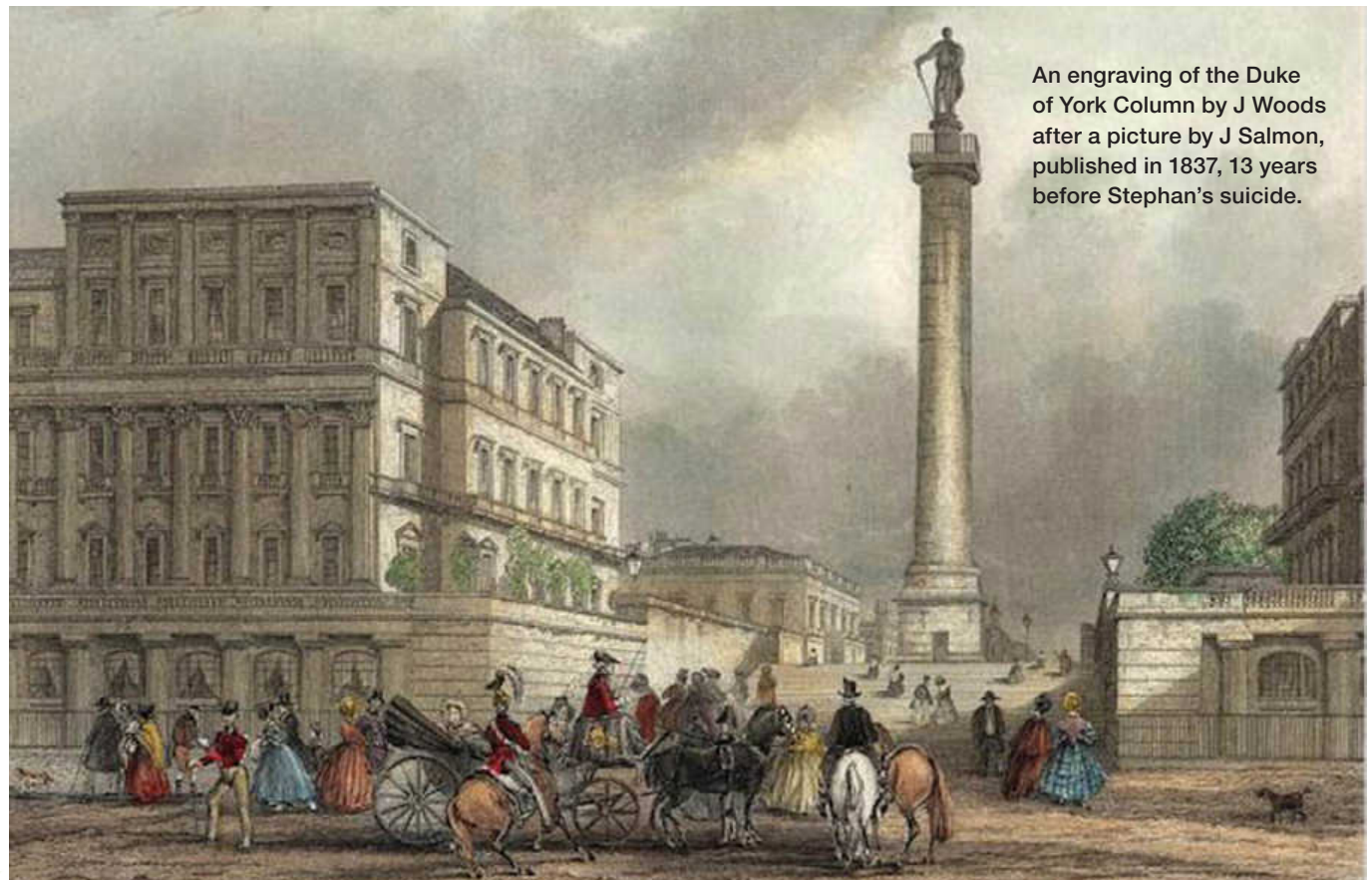
more than 10 minutes, when a stout, well-dressed gentleman, apparently between 48 and 50 years of age, paid his admission fee, at the same time addressing the parties in a few words of a foreign language, but as the porter was not acquainted with that language, he passed on without further observation. The top of the column is surrounded by a square iron railing, at a height from the base of about 260 or 280 feet. Here, according to custom, was an attendant, placed there by the authorities, for the double purpose of giving information as to the neighbouring objects of attraction, and with a view of preventing such circumstance as this morning has unfortunately taken place. It appears that the unfortunate gentleman seemed to be much delighted with the distant scenery – so much so as completely to throw the ordinary attendant off his guard. After the deceased had been at the top for 15 or 20 minutes, he suddenly, by a violent effort, threw himself over the railing

at the south-east corner, the toe of one of his boots slightly touching the iron work. He fell upon the granite pavement with a most fearful crash, falling directly upon his head, and of course producing instantaneous death. His body was horribly bruised in every part, his legs, arms, and several ribs being broken, his brains scattered on the ground, and the blood tinging not only the pavement, but even some portions of the basement of the column. His bones in two or three places protruded through his clothing.'

Other newspapers featured similar accounts, all of which revealed that Stephan was identified by a contract found in his pocket. *The Standard* recounted: 'When his pockets were searched, the only thing found by police was a small white handkerchief marked at one corner HS, a small purse containing 1s 6d in silver; and the copy of an agreement entered into between himself and Mr Lumley, of the Italian Opera House.'

Lid lifts on a life

Benjamin Lumley was the well-known impresario who ran the opera company at Her Majesty's Theatre. Stephan had been employed in the



An engraving of the Duke of York Column by J Woods after a picture by J Salmon, published in 1837, 13 years before Stephan's suicide.





orchestra as a horn player, and his contract revealed that his salary was £3 6s a week. The National Archives' website offers a currency converter (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), which translates historical values to their equivalent worth in 2005's prices. This tool reveals that Stephan's salary was roughly equivalent to £193.15 a week. Intrigued by these reports, I was keen to discover more. What sort of man was Stephan, and what drove him to such a desperate end?

A lively inquest

Newspaper reports from two days later reveal far more information about Stephan's life and death. On 16 May an inquest into his suicide was held at St Martin's Workhouse, before a jury of 13. The workhouse, where Stephan's remains had been taken, stood on the site now occupied by The National Gallery, adjacent to Trafalgar Square. In Victorian Britain an inquest was held when a death was suspicious. These inquests were something of a spectacle, attracting crowds eager to hear the gory details first hand. This was no different in Stephan's case; his inquest was crowded with Londoners anxious to hear the full facts.

Several people gave evidence at Stephan's inquest and their accounts were relayed in detailed newspaper reports. Witnesses included the keeper of the column and members of the public who had witnessed Stephan's behaviour on that fateful morning. One Mr Henry Hutton described seeing Stephan deliberately put his leg over the railings, suggesting his fall was not accidental. A surgeon described the injuries to Stephan's body in great detail. Remarkably, despite extensive trauma, his skull had remained intact. Most crucial, however, was evidence from Stephan's brother-in-law, an Emile Petit. Stephan had lived with Petit, who was a ballet master also in the employ of Lumley at Her Majesty's Theatre. His evidence revealed that Stephan had recently been troubled. *The Morning Chronicle* recounted: '[Petit] remarked that deceased had not looked well for about a week or ten days; and on Sunday last he had a long conversation with him, induced

by the deceased, who complained of a pain in his chest, and said he thought he should give up his profession, requesting the witness at the same time to endeavour to obtain another situation for him. The deceased's conversation appeared confused at the time, but the witness "was very far from thinking that he contemplated suicide".'

The inquest delivered a verdict: 'That the deceased, Henri Joseph Stephan, destroyed himself while in a state of temporary insanity.'

There is no way of knowing what compelled Stephan to end his life, but the evidence and his drastic actions make it clear that he was a troubled man.

Finding a grave

After reading so many reports on Stephan's death, I wanted to find out where he was laid to rest. I logged into my Ancestry.co.uk account and found his burial recorded on a bishop's transcript (BT). These transcripts are copies of the baptism, burial and marriage entries in parish records that were sent to the bishop every year. From this record, I discovered Stephan was laid to rest at All Soul's Cemetery in London. Now known

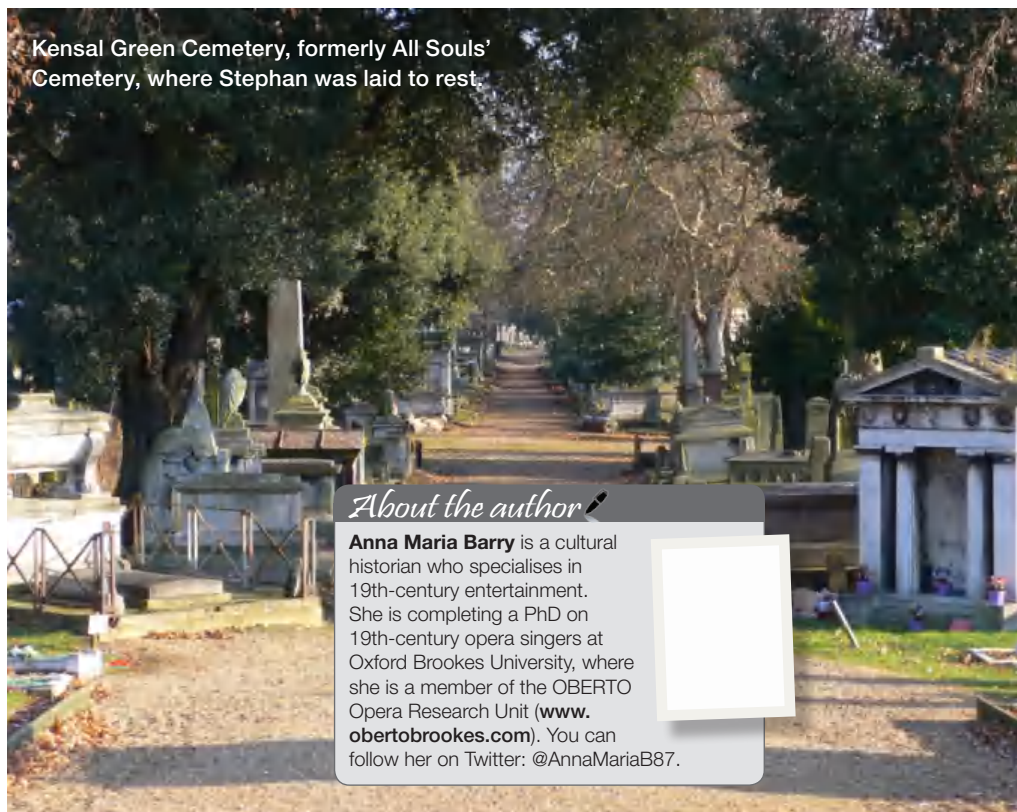
Henri
Stephan
played the
horn.

as Kensal Green Cemetery, this was one of the 'magnificent seven'; the private cemeteries that were created in 19th-century London to alleviate overcrowding in parish cemeteries. A call to the cemetery confirmed the presence of Stephan's grave, and following some email correspondence, the Friends of Kensal Green Cemetery (www.kensalgreen.co.uk) was able to provide me with an exact grave number and location. Its records also revealed that Emile Petit owned the plot in which he buried his brother-in-law; Stephan's sister was eventually laid to rest here too.

One hot day in the summer I made the pilgrimage to Kensal Green, to find Henri Stephan's final resting place. In an overgrown corner of the cemetery I found his neglected grave, and laid a bunch of flowers for the man, now at peace, whose sad story had so intrigued me. 🌿



Kensal Green Cemetery, formerly All Souls' Cemetery, where Stephan was laid to rest.



About the author

Anna Maria Barry is a cultural historian who specialises in 19th-century entertainment. She is completing a PhD on 19th-century opera singers at Oxford Brookes University, where she is a member of the OBERTO Opera Research Unit (www.obertobrookes.com). You can follow her on Twitter: @AnnaMariaB87.



Twiglets

Sometimes family history research is a whizz-bang rush of discovery, where everything falls into place. Other times it's a long-haul trawl, tedious but necessary, in the hope that a crucial record will tip the balance one way or the other. I've a feeling that trying to sort out which of the two Joseph 'Lea' and Martha marriages I found is mine could be one of the latter days, so let's kick off at www.familysearch.org.

Now, I've two main candidates for my 4x great-grandparents – Joseph Lea and Martha Gallymore who married at Middlewich, Cheshire, in March 1788, and Joseph Lea and Martha Twemlowe, who married at Brereton-cum-Smethwick five months later. I hope I can sort them into two distinct families – location, children, baptisms – then take it from there, cross-referencing with the more detailed parish records at Findmypast.co.uk.

Let's go then, inputting surname Lea (no 'h'), father Joseph, mother Martha, county Cheshire, and a wide date-range for births, 1785 to 1820.

Immediately, what looks like the Brereton-cum-Smethwick family fills the first results page, but wait, there's another brood of Leas baptised in Bidston, near Birkenhead. No, surely too far away, can't be mine, can they?

Looking closer, it's simpler than I'd first thought, and 10 minutes of listing and scribbling later, I've got myself two distinct families, with little Leas baptised in the same parish at regular two or three-year intervals – eight for the Brereton parents, four for the Bidston pair. Crucially, they're all Leas, not Leahs. One 'Lea' out of place might be a misspelt Leah, but these look to be proper Lea families. So not mine then! Does this rule out Martha Twemlowe and put the spotlight firmly on Martha Gallymore of Middlewich?

Scrolling down, we move from Lea to Leah, and here's that Middlewich 1788 baptism of a Thomas Leah, which I spotted last month. Below it, my 3x great-grandfather Joseph's baptism in Stockport, 1790. Surprisingly, that's pretty much it, which leaves me with

three possibilities: one, the records are lost or never existed; two, Martha Gallymore and Joseph Lea/Leah didn't have any more children; or three (barely daring to hope...), these *are* my 4x great-grandparents, Thomas Leah is Joseph junior's big brother, and after his birth the family moved from Middlewich to Stockport where Joseph and his siblings were born. Crikey, am I going to have to update that family tree I made already? We're going to need a bigger sheet of paper!

OK, let's run with this. First we need to find Thomas's baptism in the parish registers at Findmypast in case it has more detail. After that, hunt for him in later life. Can I link him to the other Leahs? Did he marry? Did he make the 1841 Census? Well, if my wild hunch that he's the mysterious Thomas Leah buried 1831 in the family grave in Edgeley, Stockport, turns out to be right, then no, unfortunately he didn't.

It's either a medical miracle or a shotgun wedding

But steady on, one step at a time, first look for a Thomas Leah baptised 1788, Cheshire. Here we go: Middlewich, 29 June, 'Joseph Leah and Martha his wife had a child baptiz'd nam'd Thomas'.

No more detail sadly. And, of course, I now realise, a slight spanner in the works. If Joseph and Martha married in March, and Thomas was born at the end of June, then we're looking at either a medical miracle or a shotgun wedding. My money's on the shotgun!

While we're here, what about Thomas Leah marriages, looking at 1806 onwards. Oddly, there aren't many. There's a Thomas Leah, weaver (weaver's good, old Joseph was a weaver...), and Ann Pickford marrying in 1806; and the same year another weaver, this time the bride a Sarah Poole. But Thomas would only have been 18 (too young?), plus there's no indication whereabouts in Cheshire.

Moving on to 1811, we've Ann

Bradshaw and 'Thomas Leah of Woodford, husbandman'. He sounds a tad too well-to-do for my lot.

From there we jump to 1823, when Middlewich-born Thomas Leah would have been aged 34/35. At Daresbury, a Mary Thomason; and at Prestbury the same year, a Nancy Aspinall, with the groom a silk weaver from Macclesfield. (and I think Joseph junior and family were living in nearby Broken Cross by now...). Lastly, 1825, Macclesfield again, Sarah Millington, widow, and the groom a smith by trade. Six marriages, but not a single useful father's name or witness – swizz! I'm none the wiser.

What next? Well, back at FamilySearch we could look for any little Leahs with a father called Thomas, and perhaps one of these six ladies as the mother...

With a date range of 1807-1830 there are a fair few results so I make a stab at ordering the children under 'Thomas and Sarah', 'Thomas and Mary' and so on. One leaps out: on 6 April 1828 at St Michael's, Macclesfield (where several of Joseph junior's children were baptised), Thomas and Nancy Leah christened a daughter, Martha.

Well, well. I think back to the time I searched the 1841 and 1851 Censuses in an attempt to link my 3x great-grandfather's siblings. On both, there was a mysterious young Martha Leah – described as 'niece' in 1851. In fact, there were two random Marthas in 1841, aged 14 and 15, and I'd fondly imagined it was the same girl, wandering between her aunts' houses on census night for a laugh. Could this be her? Martha baptised in 1828 would have been only 13 when the 1841 Census was taken, but how accurate were the ages on it? If 'my' Thomas Leah did die in 1831, could that Martha be his orphaned child?

My head is spinning but there's not one shred of proof. Now, just to tease you, there is one other intriguing Thomas Leah record I spotted on the way here, but we're out of space! To be continued... Merry Christmas! 🌿

About the author

Gill Shaw is editor of *Dogs Monthly* magazine and former assistant editor of *Practical Family History*. She lives in Cambridgeshire and loves singing, walking and tracking down elusive ancestors.





Treasure albums

Susan Brewer shares her fascination with autograph albums, which can reveal so much about a relative's personality and the period they lived in.



Susan's great-grandfather David Evans with his daughter Gladys, aged around 13, in June 1920.

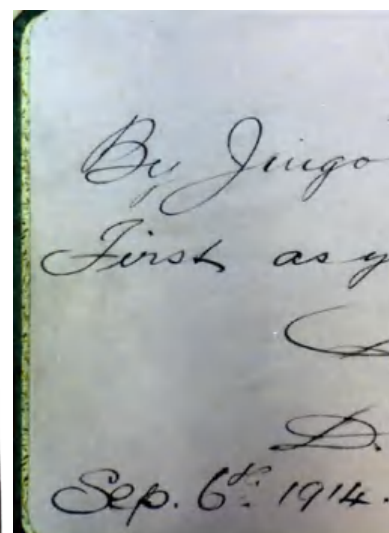
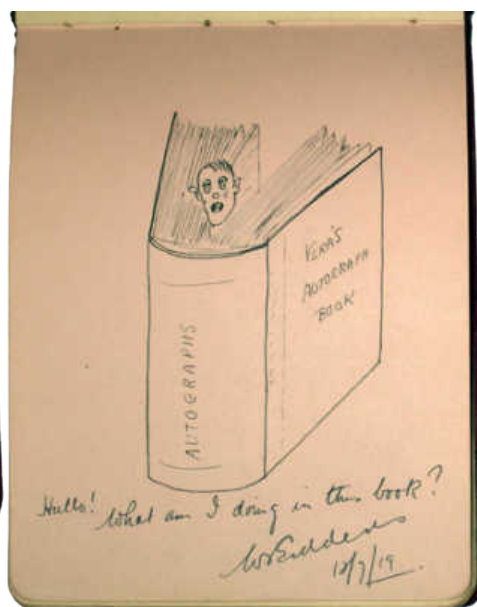


Autograph albums can give us a real insight into our relatives' personalities.

I never knew my great-grandfather, David Evans, but I do know that he was an erudite man who worked as a bookseller's assistant. In fact, he developed an intricate new filing index for the business, and many years later, in one of those coincidences that tend to happen in family history, my father was employed by that company. He knew nothing of his wife's – my mum's – grandfather, and it was only many years later when I began researching the family tree that he realised he had been using that same index daily!

Family heirlooms

David, born in 1855, must have been fond of puzzles – no doubt the brain



that helped him fathom out that revolutionary indexing system demanded complicated problems as a form of relaxation – as demonstrated in an old autograph album that I inherited a few years ago. The book had belonged to one of his four daughters, Vera, born in 1902, and inside was a page that looked at first glance like an exaggerated form of scribble. However the more I looked, the more I realised there were words, all jumbled up, criss-crossing the page. Finally, I managed to transcribe it:

*'With paternal pride
I here subscribe
My name graphicauto
Within this book
Friends also look
May pen their name or photo.'*

He wrote that in 1919, when he was 64 years old, a bit more complex than the variation on the classic, 'By hook or by crook' lines that he wrote in 1914 in his daughter Hilda's book: 'By Jingo, I'll be the first as you see.' He signed it 'Dad', writing his name underneath. Hilda was then 13, so perhaps he didn't want to give her something too complicated.

Five years later, the youngest sister, Gladys, stuck a silk union jack in Vera's book, patriotically writing, 'Britannia rules the waves'. Not to be outdone, Hilda painted a cartoon character of a boy in a sailor suit with a telescope under his

arm. It's captioned, 'Any Offers?'.

Memories of Grandad

My grandfather, Walter Giddens, who had married the eldest sister, Beatrice, obviously adored drawing witty cartoons in their books. Among them is a leaping smiley fish captioned, 'Please drop me a line', as well as a caricature of himself stuck inside a thick tome and entitled, 'Hello! What am I doing in this book?'. Also, because he had been beaten to the first page of Vera's album, Walter surpassed himself by coming up with a drawing on the following page of two page boys, one triumphantly standing on the other and captioned, 'On the second page', with an arrow pointing to the exultant one labelled 'The first page'. My grandad had a great sense of humour! When I was a child in the 1950s, he wrote in my book:

*'Algy met a bear
The bear met Algy
The bear was bulgy
The bulge was Algy.'*

Sadly though, my little blue autograph book was lost, together with all its memories, in the late 1960s.

Telling times

Browsing through these early autograph books, delighting in the way that, decades ago, people had time to draw or paint delightful pictures or to pen thoughtful messages

and loving thoughts, made me want to collect them. I acquired a few and was amazed by the contents – what a chunk of social history. The books are crammed with comments regarding suffragettes and politics, poignant verses about war, humorous rhymes, extracts of poems and words of advice, such as this 'recipe' from 1908:

*'Recipe for Cabinet Pudding:
Take a fresh young Suffragist, add a large idea of her own importance and as much sauce as you like. Allow her to stand on a Cabinet Minister's doorstep until in a white heat. Mix with one or two policeman, well roll in the mud and when hot run into a Police Court and allow to simmer. Garnish with sauce of martyrdom. Popular dish – always in season. Lost – a little self-respect.'*

Or the wartime (penned in 1914):

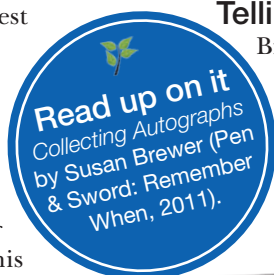
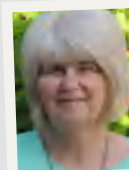
*'How to Cook A German Sausage:
Cook on a British Kitchener
Greece well with Russian tallow
Flavour with a little Jellicoe
Servia up with French capons and Brussels scouts.'*

Some of the paintings in my books are beautiful, often depictions of women from earlier eras – like us, people from before the First World War were just as fascinated by 'period costume'. There are cartoons influenced by artists such as Louis Wain, Walt Disney, Mabel Lucie Attwell and Beatrix Potter, while designs featuring landscapes, flowers, animals and children were popular. The most favoured verse, which seems to be in almost every book, is the one beginning 'Roses are red', while, of course, 'By hook or by crook' was much loved too.

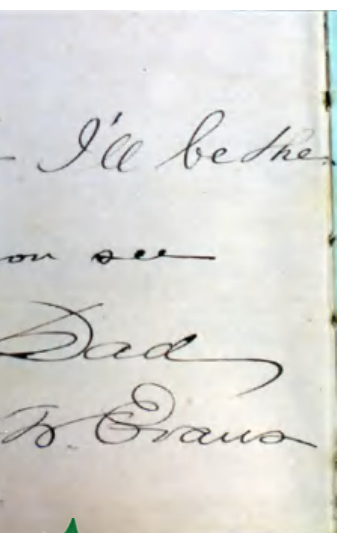
For me, the interesting thing about the autographs, even in those books that I have acquired from strangers, is the way that their character shines through. Thoughtful, happy, sad, bossy, flippant, sentimental – you can tell a lot from an inscription in an autograph album! 🌿

About the author

A post-war 'baby-boomer', Susan Brewer began researching her family tree in the 1960s, but still has a long way to go. She's a writer of books about collectables and also of light-hearted novels. However, she has just completed a novel loosely woven around her ancestors in the Cambridgeshire Fens, which she hopes will be published next year.



Some of the wonderful autographs and illustrations in Susan's inherited autograph albums.





Join **Jayne Shrimpton** in a celebration of beautiful clothes fit for a Christmas ball.

Danse de l'Ours
(The Grisly Bear)
by Edouard
Touraine, 1912,
illustrates the
vogue for more
energetic dancing
and exotic evening
styles of the pre-
WW1 era.

Put on your glad rags!

Touraine 12



As Christmas draws near, we may well be arraying ourselves in glittering party clothes and other stylish outfits for festive gatherings with relatives, neighbours and friends. Earlier generations loved dressing up too, and here we look at the 'posh frocks' and formal suits worn by past family members on special occasions.

Dressed to impress

Traditionally in polite society it was considered essential to dress correctly for the time of day and for different occasions. In the mornings modest, relaxed indoor garments were permitted; then as social activities entered the day's schedule, clothing became progressively smarter or more 'dressy', culminating in formal ensembles for evening wear. Naturally this sartorial routine, which required the support of many servants, was unfamiliar to most working people, although by the mid-1800s as the etiquette of dress and social conduct became more pronounced, ancestors aspiring to better themselves and ascend the social ladder may have followed the guidelines published in contemporary magazines and

manuals. Even in ordinary homes usually a distinction existed between work garments or street wear and comfortable indoor clothes. It was widely acknowledged that one should appear well-groomed when outdoors in public and when visiting friends and relatives or hosting gatherings; while attending church on Sunday, family weddings and local events provided further opportunities for wearing a smart suit, new hat, lace collar or bow tie.

Victorian ensembles

Our more privileged and prosperous ancestors will have enjoyed active social lives and probably attended special afternoon or evening events requiring immaculate, even exclusive forms of dress. During the Victorian era varying degrees of formality developed for different occasions, and a well-dressed lady needed several costumes: a relaxed 'at-home' evening dress, an ornate dinner party gown, a more lavish costume for receptions and visits to the opera, theatre and concert hall, and, lastly, the finest toilette for balls and dances. Generally 'full dress' (evening dress) was fashioned with a low-cut neckline and short sleeves, although gowns

worn for intimate dinners and parties were typically more concealing than ball dresses. While dinner dress could be handsome, even sumptuous, ball gowns should be fine and light – feminine and alluring, but also practical for dancing in stuffy, crowded ballrooms. Ironically, the amount of clothing was at odds with the terminology used, in that 'undress' (informal morning wear) featured a high neckline and long sleeves, while semi-formal 'half-dress' exposed more of the female figure; and 'full dress', with its plunging neckline and bare arms, could be very revealing.

Evening wear essentially followed fashion and early-Victorian evening bodices were heavily-boned and

By the 1860s wealthy ancestors sometimes posed for photographs in full evening dress, as in this *carte de visite* of a married lady wearing a handsome velvet gown, c1866-1868.



Left: This plate from *Modes de Paris*, March 1841, displays the pastel silk gowns with plunging necklines and lace and floral decoration admired in the early-Victorian era.



Right: This plate from *The English Woman's Domestic Magazine*, 1876, shows the ornate coiffures and complex draperies of luxurious *haute couture* evening wear at this time.





BALL GOWNS & BLACK BOW TIES



By the late-1800s more of our ancestors had occasions to adopt evening wear. Dark net and watered (moiré) silk are worn with jewellery and a fan in this *carte de visite* of c1890.

as muslin, organdie or tarlatan – delicate fabrics suggestive of youth and innocence – while extravagant tulles and handsome, richly-coloured silks and satins embellished with lace, were considered suitable for married women. Such distinctions signalled whether or not a lady was ‘available’ in the marriage market – a matter of importance, since introductions to potential suitors were often made and courtships conducted at evening events.

With the rise of *haute couture*, wealthy ladies visited Paris for designer

pointed. Extremely décolleté (‘... far too much so for strict delicacy to approve’, according to the *Ladies Cabinet*, 1844), the neckline was worn well off the shoulders and often finished with a deep falling lace ‘bertha’. Further decoration included delicate lace flounces and ornamental flowers, the short sleeves puffed and flounced or edged with lace ruffles. Full skirts sometimes featured over-skirts trimmed with lace or festooned with ribbons and flowers. Favoured materials included plain, ‘shot’ and figured silks, glacé silks, tarlatan and barège and soft colours: creamy-white, pink, pale blue and lemon. Accessories included neat fans, short kid gloves or black silk mittens for parties, and headdresses of lace and ribbons or flower wreaths.

As fashion became more conspicuous in the mid-1800s so evening wear grew increasingly opulent. Crinoline-supported dinner and ball gowns reached immense proportions in the later 1850s and early 1860s, further accentuated by tiers of lace or swags of fabric. For balls and formal receptions, ideally young unmarried girls wore white gowns of fine gauzy material such

evening gowns – exclusive dresses fashioned from luxurious fabrics that cost a small fortune and were usually only wearable once or twice, for gossamer fabrics snagged easily and soon became limp and tawdry. Evening dresses of the early 1870s were frothy confections of pastel silks glimpsed through overskirts of muslin, net or gauze. Bustles, panniers and swishing trained hemlines created a feminine, curvaceous effect softened further by frills, flounces and bows. As bodices lengthened and skirts narrowed during the later 1870s, dinner and ball gowns grew more slender and drapery cascaded into a sweeping train. Hair throughout the decade was dressed into an ornate chignon and decorated for evening wear with feathers, ribbons and flowers.

During the early 1880s a low square neckline with covered shoulders prevailed, until late-decade, when a square, round or V-shaped décolletage was worn with narrow shoulder straps, exposing the upper arms again. Late-Victorian styles could be very elaborate, displaying frills, bows, lace and new embellishments such as metal beads, sequins, artificial

pearls and even small stuffed birds and insects, the resplendent effect enhanced with vibrant colours and rich fabrics including Genoese velvet, plush, Ottoman silks and brocades. Long white kid, or suede or coloured silk gloves were worn with bracelets and large fans were often formed of ostrich plumes or painted gauze. The sleeveless evening gown remained popular until the 1890s, when large puffed sleeves were introduced and skirts flared out gracefully towards the hemline. Diaphanous over-dresses of net and chiffon layered over coloured silk under-dresses were much admired by the late 1890s, accessorised with long evening gloves fastened with pearl buttons and co-ordinating satin shoes.

Edwardian opulence

High-ranking Edwardian ladies still had exclusive costumes made by Parisian fashion houses although



This HJ Nicholl & Co catalogue illustration from c1929 shows both the traditional male dress coat with white tie and more modern dinner jacket or ‘tuxedo’.

Images: Black dress c.1890, copy courtesy of Christine Morris; The Needlewoman, the ‘Grisly Bear’, Modes de Paris, 1841, HJ Nicholl catalogue, crêpe dinner dress, 1950s couple, courtesy of Jayne Shrimpton; Elsa Schiaparelli designs, Christmas party, images from *The Queen and The English Woman’s Domestic Magazine*, courtesy of Maureen Harris; lady in velvet gown, courtesy of www.cartedevisite.co.uk.



couturiers like Worth and Paquin were now opening prestigious London showrooms featuring live mannequins. Middle-class women purchased French-inspired designs in up-market department stores or had personalised versions made by their favourite local dressmaker. The sinuous art nouveau aesthetic of the early 1900s favoured a curvaceous female silhouette, this being expressed most strikingly in lavish evening gowns with narrow shoulder straps, hour-glass bodices and clinging skirts with fish-tail hemlines. Fashionable materials included silk, satin, chiffon and net, ornamented profusely with lace, embroidery and sequins. The ultra-feminine ensemble was completed with long fitted gloves, a fan, a pearl or diamond choker necklace, and, for the most formal events, a tiara – the evening accessory of the Edwardian era.

Ballrooms & jazz clubs

During the 20th century popular

music became increasingly significant in shaping nightlife. Syncopated ragtime music introduced livelier dancing into ballrooms and the performance of more active dances such as the Turkey Trot and the Grisly Bear were aided in the early 1910s by the development of a more natural female silhouette and softer, pliable corsets. The trend in evening wear was for slender, layered tunic gowns and innovative harem pants inspired by the pioneering designs of Parisian couturier Paul Poiret. Fashioned in floating chiffons, sensuous silks and plush velvets in vibrant colours ornamented with bold appliqué work and exotic tassels, pre-WW1 styles owed much to the theatrical influence and imagined 'orientalism' of Léon Bakst and the Ballet Russes, who had entranced Paris in 1909.

Evening modes of the early 1920s were striking, luxurious yet quintessentially elegant, featuring sedate hemlines and traditional accessories. However a young, pleasure-seeking generation was now frequenting public dance

halls and jazz clubs and from mid-decade, as the craze grew for rhythmic jazz music and energetic dancing, new tubular, knee-length flapper dance frocks in dazzling white, jet black, jade green, lacquer red, deep rose, burnt orange, even metallic fabrics were all the rage. Layered, split skirts, swaying fringes, glittering beads and sequins, jewelled and diamanté trimmings, strings of eye-catching beads and long feather boas all reflected the light and accentuated movement.

Cocktails and dinner dances

Bars, dancing and cocktail parties epitomised 1930s' nightlife and, under the influence of Hollywood films, evening wear acquired a new sophistication. Hemlines of graceful evening gowns lowered to ankle length or trailed languidly on the floor, while soft, draping materials such as shimmering satin and clinging crêpe de Chine in shades like coral, powder blue, eau de nil, taupe or classic black were bias-cut to mould to the figure. At the high end of fashion, scintillating dresses featured asymmetrical necklines worn off one shoulder, or plunged to

a daringly low V at the back, revealing golden, newly-bronzed skin, accessories including gleaming gold and silver lamé dance shoes, velvet evening coats, deep fur stoles and slinky shoulder capes. Shining waved hair framed glowing faces painted with glamorous movie-star cosmetics: bright lipstick, rouged cheeks, mascara, glossed eyelids and arched plucked eyebrows.

During the Second World War social occasions were restricted and due to shortages, few people acquired

This elegant post-WW2 full-length brown crêpe dinner dress cost around £17 11s and 11 coupons, as featured in a 1947 edition of *Good Housekeeping* magazine. ▶



During the 1930s clinging bias-cut evening gowns and stunning capes and jackets created a new glamour, as seen in these designs by Elsa Schiaparelli, 1938.





BALL GOWNS & BLACK BOW TIES

new clothes, but with Big Band orchestras and swing music popular at military bases and other local dances, many servicemen and women wore their uniforms, while civilian girls wore practical knee-length dresses. Afterwards a stately feminine elegance returned, despite continued rationing, and formal evening wear was purchased (by those who could afford it), using coupons and money. As life gradually returned to normal and a modern era dawned in the 1950s, our more recent relatives and perhaps some *Family Tree* readers enjoyed visiting dance halls and attending works dinner dances, sports and social club functions and the like, wearing full evening dress or fashionable full-skirted cocktail dresses.

Male evening dress

Visually men's evening dress can seem uninteresting compared to ladies' eye-catching styles, although creating the correct impression was equally important. Initially a black 'dress coat' was *de rigueur* – a tail coat cut in straight across the waist, tailored from fine milled cloth and usually featuring a silk or velvet collar and facings. This was worn with long black pantaloons or tight-fitting knee breeches, with


black silk stockings and soft dress shoes and a white evening dress shirt with a pleated or frilled front. Initially the waistcoat could be coloured but after the mid-19th century it was usually black or white and a white waistcoat was required for full evening dress, accessorised with a white necktie. The outfit was completed with white evening gloves and a collapsible opera hat (top hat with a spring in the crown), called a gibus.

After the mid-1800s trousers increasingly superseded breeches and pantaloons for evening wear: generally black, in the later 1800s they were usually cut narrower than regular trousers, the outside leg seam often finished with black braid. The tail coat and white accessories remained correct for formal occasions such as grand assemblies, public dinners and balls, but during the 1880s a more relaxed suit evolved for less formal events. Based on the regular lounge jacket, the new hip-length evening jacket closely resembled the American Tuxedo. It was worn with a white or black waistcoat or a cummerbund, black evening trousers and usually a black bow tie.

The debonair male tail coat, silk opera hat, white gloves, cane and



Alluring halter-neck cocktail dresses in gleaming fabrics were popular for dinner-dances in the mid-20th century, as seen in this family photograph, c1955.

evening cloak or coat remained a 'timeless' style for balls and formal events, its enduring appeal encouraged by the evening dress worn on stage and screen, especially in musicals featuring Fred Astaire. However, the more relaxed dinner jacket and black bow tie became increasingly popular for events such as private dinner parties, the theatre and concerts and over time the dress suit passed out of regular use altogether. 



Everybody is well-dressed in evening or formal day wear for this festive scene, 'Around the Christmas Tree', illustrated in *Art-Gout-Beauté*, December 1923.



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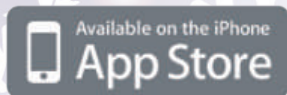
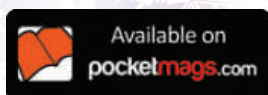
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Moving house

Q These photos are copies from glass-plate negatives of extremely high quality, from a collection in our family. We think they were taken by George Sadler (c1823-1901) or by his son Evan George Sadler (1857-1932), who both had photographic studios in Cardiff from around 1850 to the early 1900s. The people in the photos are definitely not connected with the Sadler family in Cardiff at this period. The pictures appear to be a

commission to photograph a family and their new house. There is so much information here: they demand to be identified! We take the location to be the Cardiff area, but where is it? The layout of the house is so clear that it should be possible to identify it, if it still exists. Then from the censuses we might identify the family. From the women's and children's dress I assume it to be the mid-1890s: is this reasonable? I am in the process of showing copies to local history

societies in the Cardiff area in the hope that someone might recognise the setting. I have yet to visit the record office.
Brian Pollard
pollardgen@talktalk.net

A This is an interesting set of images deriving from the traditional glass-plate negatives used by most Victorian and Edwardian photographers. Convenient dry photographic plates were available by the late 1870s/1880s and, along with a general lowering



Among the various photographs are depicted several family members ranging from adults to small children and the servants who completed their household.

Four or more domestic servants are present here, including maids in smart black uniforms and aprons and a horse-drawn coachman wearing traditional livery.

Were these photos taken to mark the family moving into their newly built home?



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● **FACEBOOK & TWITTER**
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of prices of photographic equipment, encouraged a surge in amateur photography chiefly among middle-class hobbyists. Glass negatives sometimes survive within family collections, reflecting our ancestors' interests. I cannot confirm from their appearance whether these particular photographs are the work of a skilled amateur or professional photographer, but have no good reason to doubt your belief that they were taken by Cardiff photographers, George and Evan Sadler.

I agree that these photographs were intended to record the moving of a family into their new home – quite a common photographic theme by the late 19th century. This late-Victorian villa is clearly a new dwelling, as we see from the fresh brickwork of



the buildings and pristine grounds.

I would suggest that three different generations may be portrayed here, although it is a little difficult from the diverse groupings to judge who is who. For example, I believe the lady in a dark gown seated with a man, little girl and two 'teenagers' in one photo appears wearing a white apron in another. So was she the lady of the house, or (less likely) the nanny? Several servants are depicted. This confirms what we can deduce from the setting – that this was a fairly affluent family with a comfortable lifestyle.

The date of these photos is crucial when it comes to identification of the subjects. Luckily the style of the ladies' sleeves indicates a firm time frame of c1898-1901, the shoulder frills and epaulettes featured on several women's sleeves representing the late phase of the puffed 'leg-o'-mutton' style, which had died out by 1901. The turn-of-century date coincides well with the 1901 Census and it seems highly probable that you will find most or all of these people recorded there. As for determining the location, this should become much clearer as you progress with contacting Cardiff local and family history societies and Glamorgan Archives.

JS 

Bruckner Smith

Q Herbert William Bruckner Smith was born at Fareham on 15 January 1889. Herbert William Smith joined the Royal Naval Air Service (RNAS) in 1917, was transferred to the RAF in 1918 and discharged in 1920. On his service record he gave his date of birth as 15 January 1886 and his 'wife' as Alice. She was Alice Harding née Rhodes, and

already married. Fareham Register Office confirms that there were no Herbert William Smiths born on that date, but there was a Herbert Bruckner Smith. I think there is a strong possibility that on his enlistment he dropped the German-sounding name.

I now have found that HWB Smith was married in 1921 to Blanche Eliza Harris. The marriage certificate confirms that HWB and HW Smith are the same person.

Herbert William Bruckner Smith died on 15 April 1960 in Oxford. The death certificate describes him as 'director, poultry farmer'. There was money left to his sister and brother, both Bruckner Smiths, and another brother, just Smith. Any help confirming his whereabouts after 1930 would be helpful.

Bob Scott

bob7417@sky.com

A It's always interesting when you encounter something like this in your family history. Historically relations between the UK and Prussia/Germany were good and, until the late 19th century, we still owned Heligoland. But as you note, German names fell rapidly out of favour once the war started, being informally dropped or anglicised. Cases where some parts of a family adopt a (usually) maternal surname as a sort of double-barrelled name are also quite common.

The discrepancy in date of birth is less easily explained. There's no obvious reason for giving a birth date three years earlier than the actual one and this may just be an error by the clerk who compiled the service documentation and was then continued by Herbert. On the other hand it's possible Herbert really did believe he was born in 1886 and gave that date in good faith to both the

service clerk and the priest conducting the marriage.

So many newspapers are now available online that it's worth searching them – poultry farmers, for example, might feature in agricultural show prize lists. You may also like to search the 1939 Register, now available for England and Wales online (see pages 23-25), and follow Emma Jolly's advice for people researching the mid-20th century period (see pages 26-29). **DF**

No evidence of death

Q My 2x great-grandfather was Henry Bartlett from St Germans, Cornwall. He was a stoker in the Royal Navy, aged 23 when he joined, according to his continuous service engagement of 21 March 1867. He married Julia Willoughby in 1868 and was on the *Prince Consort* in Naples Harbour for the 1871 Census. His number was 468B. Then he vanished.

According to family lore he died from wounds in an Indian battle and was buried in Malta, with his comrades erecting a tombstone for him. But there is no record in English births, marriages or deaths, naval records or Families in British India Society (FIBIS) of his death or divorce. There is no record of his death in Malta. There is no record of Julia Bartlett receiving a naval pension but she did remarry in March 1872 in Plymouth. There is also no record of her and her daughter, Frances, in the 1871 Census under Bartlett or her new married name, from 1872, of Durham.

Surely an active stoker cannot die or disappear without mention in the records?

Doug Harman

lordsdoug@yahoo.com

A If people didn't disappear without trace family history would be very dull! I'm slightly surprised there is only the continuous service engagement in ADM139 at The National Archives (TNA) for Henry. I would have expected more – notably in ADM 188/246 (indexes to registers of seamen's services), which would lead to more details of service – however, I found nothing. HMS *Prince Consort* served in the Mediterranean from 1867 to 1871 so would have returned home only a few months after the census was taken. It would be worth looking for her ship's log in ADM 53 at TNA. Logs seldom show anything about individuals but will tell you where the ship was. As he was on HMS *Prince Consort* for the 1871 Census, and his widow remarried in March 1872, knowing the ship's programme will enable you to pin down when he might have died. Information about naval burials in Malta is surprisingly thin considering it was a main fleet base and there was a hospital at Bighi. Some naval cemeteries were built over and the remains interred elsewhere. I'm slightly sceptical about the India bit as the timing doesn't seem to match, but the ship's log may help. **DF**

My father's parents

Q I need to overcome the inability to identify my father's parents even though both are recorded on his birth certificate. My main question is how can I identify my paternal grandparents when all I have is a birth certificate and adoption agreement but nothing to substantiate them with other documentation, such as marriage certificate, electoral register, trade directory etc?

Deborah Winter

deborahwinter1@aol.co.uk 



A We only have two documents to play with here; your father's birth certificate and a legal document outlining the terms of his adoption. These tell us that he wasn't adopted until he was nearly four years old in 1939. Later that same year, the 1939 Adoption of Children (Regulation) Act was passed, which would have required the involvement of the relevant local authority, but in February 1939 an adoption could still be arranged informally, between the parents and the adopters. It's likely therefore that there is no paperwork surviving from the adoption process other than the signed agreement that you already have.

The birth certificate names a father (Frank Mitchell) and a mother (Annie Mitchell, formerly Collins) whereas the adoption agreement mentions only the mother, here named as Beatrice Annie Mitchell. This invites the question, 'What happened to Frank?' to which there are only three possible answers: he died; he left Beatrice/Annie; or he never existed.

The last of these may seem like an odd suggestion; clearly (biologically) there must have been a man involved in fathering the child but we only have Annie's word for it (as the informant on your father's birth certificate) that he was called Frank Mitchell.

It's clear that there was no marriage in England and Wales between a Frank Mitchell and a Beatrice/Annie Collins (I can't see any sign of one in Scotland or Ireland either) and there don't seem to be any other children of the marriage (if indeed there was a marriage) so, unless they married outside the UK, at least some of the information given by Annie on the birth certificate must be suspect.

One of the biggest problems we have here is that the two surnames (Mitchell and Collins) are just too common and the uncertainty around your grandmother's forename doesn't exactly help. All of this makes it next to impossible to identify any potential birth or death records for her.

I would want to look at the electoral registers for her home address (it's the same on both documents); it would be interesting to see who's listed there and for how long (unfortunately, no electoral registers were created between 1940 and 1944). I would also want to check the 1939 National Register, now available at Findmypast.co.uk and at The National Archives (TNA). This will hopefully give you some vital information about your grandmother, including her date of birth. **DA**

Industrial school

Q My father Albert Ernest Bastin was born on 17 November 1905 at 36 College Street, Homerton, Middlesex.

On the 1911 Census he and the family are living at 74 Huxley Road, Upper Edmonton, Middlesex.

His father Arthur Henry Bastin died of typhoid on 2 January 1914. His mother Mary Ann Bastin married widower Charles W Meddings on 8 August 1916.

The family moved to 46 Skeltons Lane, Leyton, Essex where they had a general store. The business failed and I next found Charles W and Mary Ann Meddings on the 1919 electoral register living at 25 Hartwell Cottages, London E8.

On the 1921 electoral register they are living at 3 Elton Street, Islington N16. Charles W Meddings committed suicide on 31 July 1921 in the River Lea near Leabridge, London E5.

Can you help?

Ceylon or India?

Q When I was young, my maternal grandmother mentioned that her father, Joshua Millington (born in 1877), a Great Western Railway and London Midland & Scottish railway engineer based at Worcester, spent a short time in India. I have discovered on Findmypast.co.uk an outgoing passenger list entry for a J Millington, engineer, aged 37, travelling alone in 1915 from London to Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Apart from the destination, all the details match my grandmother's account. Can anyone determine whether the photo was taken in Ceylon rather than India, as claimed?

Michael Langtree

mikelangtree@yahoo.co.uk



On the 1925 electoral register Mary Ann Meddings and her eldest son Arthur Henry Bastin are living at 3 Elton Street, Islington N16.

My father Albert Ernest Bastin married Annie Louisa Tutthill on 5 August 1928 aged 22, and their address is given as 3 Elton Street, Islington.

He often mentioned the workhouse, telling me how awful it was, but he would never give more details. He learned tailoring but would only say that it was at college. Could this have been a trade school?

My problem is that, between the 1911 Census and his marriage in 1928, I have been unable to find any details about him. Can you help?

Derek Bastin

derek_bastin@btinternet.com

A It's most likely that your father was in an industrial school rather than a workhouse. Industrial schools grew out of the mid-Victorian poor law system and the 1908 Children's Act set out a number of circumstances in which children under the age of 14 might be admitted to one of these institutions. In this case, it seems likely that your grandmother was unable to look after your father following her first husband's death in 1914 and may have been declared 'unfit'.

The problem is knowing which of the scores of industrial schools in the north London/Middlesex area your father was in. His 'case' would have been handled by the poor law authorities – probably the Edmonton Union, as the family was



Can you help?

Regimental dress belt?

Q This mystery belt is owned by a friend of mine. It is gold braid backed with thin fine leather, fastening with an elaborate gilt buckle with two silver badges of the Royal Engineers with the cypher of George V mounted on it. These are usually attributed by collectors to the wives and daughters of officers of the regiment whose badge they carry and were supposedly worn as a formal evening belt on appropriate regimental occasions, probably in India or other areas of empire. The expensive materials and the small size – this example is about a 22-inch waist – all suggest they are a ladies' dress item.

Does anyone have a photograph of the belt being used this way? If so it would definitely identify them for what they are.

An alternative suggestion is that they were made by the regiments for Indian servants to wear on formal occasions but if so the waist would suggest they were worn by young boys.

Jon Mills

cdwardens@yahoo.co.uk



living there when his father died – but it's rarely that simple. It's all tied up with the highly complex system of 'settlement', which defined the parish (and therefore the poor law union) to which an individual 'belonged'. The process was set out in a number of Acts of Parliament, principally, the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, but as the rules changed over the years and were frequently subject to the interpretation of individual poor law officials, it's never easy to be certain where to look for records.

I would begin with a search for records of the Edmonton Poor Law Union. The originals are held by the London Metropolitan Archives and some are

available online at Ancestry.co.uk.

There is a wealth of useful information on Peter Higginbotham's excellent websites www.workhouses.org.uk and www.childrenshomes.org.uk. **DA**



In search of twins

Q I undertook a small search for a friend of mine, not realising that it would be as challenging as it has become!

I am told that Henry and Thomas Dyer were twins, born about 1862/1863 in the

Woking area of Surrey. There is also the possibility that they were triplets and that there was a girl (no information about her).

Thomas and Henry first appear on the 1881 Census, age 18, where they are 'Shop Lads (Mess)' at High Street, Ealing with Old Brentford, boarding with Alfred Matthews, cabinet maker. They go on to become carpenters/cabinet makers.

Thomas married Rebecca King on 20 May 1885 at March, Cambridgeshire, in the Centenary Baptist Chapel. His father is shown as Henry Dyer, clerk, deceased. Henry married Emily and his father is shown as Edward Dyer, clerk.

I can find no birth record of them as twins and no record of them together on a census or baptism – nothing before 1881. There is no record of a baptism in Woking or contiguous parishes (Surrey Heritage Centre, Woking). There is a possibility that their births were never registered. It is also possible that they were Nonconformist and that any baptism was some time after the birth.

Is there anything obvious that I have missed?

Jacqueline Hewitt

jaccahewitt@btinternet.com

A I searched for a birth registration or baptism anywhere in Britain for Henry and Thomas Dyer and for an entry in the 1871 Census. Like you, I drew a complete blank.

My next thought was that since they give different fathers on their marriage certificates the fathers might be twins and the boys therefore first cousins, born around the same time. However, I couldn't find anything to support this: no Edward or Henry Dyer in the right area around the right time.

Another aspect I

investigated, given your mention of triplets and a sister, was that either Henry or Thomas had a twin sister and the other boy was an ordinary sibling. I got no further with this either.

It seemed likely, therefore, that Henry and Thomas were registered under a different surname, either because they were born before their parents' marriage or because their father died when they were very young and their mother remarried.

Despite searching for twins – either brothers or brother/sister – under other surnames I couldn't find anything that seemed relevant.

I next searched for all entries in 1871 for the first name Henry born 1862+/-2 years in Woking and all entries likewise for Thomas then I cross-checked the surnames. I found three matches: Collins, Howard and Wilson.

Both the Collins and the Howard Henry and Thomas were found to be from different families but the Henry and Thomas Wilson were

Can you help?

Suffragettes, suffragists & artists

Q I write on all aspects of the women's suffrage movement and would dearly like to hear from any *FT* reader who holds a collection of family papers relating to a 'suffragette' or 'suffragist' ancestor. Over and above that general interest, I am also researching in detail artists – women and men – associated with the suffrage movement. My website womanandhersphere.com gives full details of all my research and publications **Elizabeth Crawford** e.crawford@sphere20.freeserve.co.uk





indeed twins, aged eight and born Woking, living with parents William and Fanny Wilson in Clewer, Windsor. But again I couldn't make any progress. There were no birth registrations for Henry and Thomas Wilson and no marriage of a William Wilson to Fanny, so no maiden name. The only positive note was that I couldn't find them as Wilson after 1881. Fanny was shown as born in Guildford so I looked for a baptism for a Fanny Dyer in Guildford around 1827, but again no success.

It all seemed yet another dead end but browsing on the surname Dyer and birthplace Woking brought up an entry for an 11-year-old servant, Elizabeth Dyer, in Windsor, just a stone's throw from the Wilson family, and she too was born in Woking. Just three years older than the twins, she could be the unknown sister and this surely couldn't be a coincidence? I tried to identify Elizabeth and found a birth registration for Elizabeth Dyer in the March quarter of 1861 in the Guildford district. There was also an 1861 entry for four-week-old Elizabeth with parents and siblings. Sadly this also proved a dead end as this Elizabeth Dyer was still at home with her family in Woking in 1871.

As a last-ditch effort I looked in the 1861 Census for entries for the first name Fanny born around 1827 in the Woking area on the

grounds that if the twins were born there in 1862/1863 then she would have to have been near there in 1861.

One hit seemed to throw up coincidences. The Cathery family in Woking was headed by father Edward who was a railway clerk and the name and occupation matched Henry's marriage certificate, which gave his father as Edward Dyer, clerk. There was also a daughter, Elizabeth Cathery, aged one and born in Woking to match the 1871 Windsor Elizabeth Dyer. The wife, Fanny, was born around 1827 in Clandon, which is near Guildford so would fit the Windsor Fanny Wilson. But what would a Cathery family have to do with the names Dyer and Wilson?

There was no marriage for Edward Cathery to Fanny, so no means of knowing her 'maiden' name, and Edward died in 1864. There were nine children across the 1851 and 1861 Censuses with evidence of an earlier marriage for Edward. The children from the second 'marriage' were William, Fanny, Harriett and Elizabeth so I looked for birth registrations for these. I could hardly believe it when Fanny's birth registration showed her to be Fanny Dyer Cathery! And just after the census there were two other Cathery births in the index: Henry and Thomas on consecutive pages in the December quarter of 1862!

The last piece of the jigsaw

Can you help?

Seeking Devonshire soldier's birth

Q A member of curiousfox.com suggested that I write to *FT* regarding my quest, which is as follows: Charles Henry Jackson was a captain in the 86th (Royal County Down) Regiment of Foot and was stationed at: Gibraltar (1864-1866); Gibraltar/Port Elizabeth (S Africa) 1867; Mauritius 1868; Mauritius/Cape of Good Hope 1869; Mauritius 1870; Mauritius/Cape of Good Hope 1871; Cape of Good Hope 1872-1874. He remained in South Africa and married Johanna Reneira Catherina Cloete in 1874. I have a photo of his headstone in the Wynberg Cemetery, Wynberg, Western Cape, which gives his date of birth as 6 June 1838. I have his South African death notice, which indicates he was born in Devonshire, and died 17 May 1905 in Vredenhof, Wynberg, Western Cape, South Africa at the age of 66 years and 11 months, and lists all his children, one of whom is my wife's grandfather. He appears to have played a lot of cricket for the 86th regiment! I have searched for a birth in Devonshire without any luck, and have not found any references to him in the UK census records.

He was promoted to ensign on 3 July 1858 and lieutenant on 20 February 1863 according to *The New Annual Army List*, *Militia List*, and *Indian Civil Service List*, 1871 and had 13 years service on full pay at that time.

I am looking for his birth, birth place, or baptism and ancestry, if anyone can help.

Paul Tanner-Tremaine
paul@tantrem.com

then fell into place with the baptism of Fanny Dyer in West Clandon on 4 May 1828 to James and Sarah Dyer. James Dyer married Sarah Elizabeth Christmas on 20 February 1810 in West Clandon.

So the twins, Henry and Thomas, were registered as Cathery, recorded as Wilson in 1881 because they were living with William Wilson and then, like their sister Elizabeth, decided to be known by their mother's surname of Dyer. **ME**

on 6 March 1852. He was a corporal by the time his son was born in 1855, and died a sergeant on 16 July 1860. I believe at the time Britain was involved in the Chinese Opium War, which ended in October/November of that year, with the looting of the Summer Palace at Peking. Any suggestions as to finding details of his death would be much appreciated.

Maureen Smith
13 Swift Close, Eastleigh,
Hants SO50 9LD

Can you help?

Kendrick Girls' School, Reading

Q Following on from the publication of my book *Exmouth's Rolle* (see *FT* September 'Reviews' or email rollecollege@yahoo.co.uk for further details) I am currently researching Kendrick Girls' School, Reading (my old grammar school), so, if any readers have memories of that school (their own or those of family members), I would be very pleased to receive them at the email address below.

Daphne Barnes-Phillips
kendrickbook2017@yahoo.co.uk

Royal Marine death

Q I am trying to find the death certificate of an ancestor who died in Shanghai, China in 1860. He was John Glover and born in Hampshire in 1824. He enlisted in the Royal Marine Artillery in 1824 at Portsea. In the 1851 Census he was a bombardier, as he was when he married

A I don't think you will find a General Register Office (GRO) death certificate for a Royal Marine who died fighting overseas in 1860, as the military kept their own records of casualties. Royal Marines were part of the Royal Navy.

However, all is not lost! There are nominal rolls of the casualties that occurred during the wars with China that were



compiled by the War Office. The rolls for 1860 can be found at TNA in references WO 32/8230, WO 32/8234, and WO 32/8233. They haven't been digitised, so you must visit TNA to see them. If he died as a result of the fighting you should at least discover the battle in which he died.

The Admiralty also kept a general index of men who died in service between 1854 and 1911. This is register ADM 104/144, which you can download from the TNA website for free, so it may be worth searching this at home first.

However, it is possible that John did not die in action. If this is the case his death may have been recorded by one of the civil processes by which British deaths abroad were documented. Try looking at the records for deaths of Britons abroad at www.bmdregisters.co.uk. These records include series RG 32 through to RG 36 from TNA, which have been digitised.

Once you've looked in the above sources, I'd recommend you contact the Royal Marines Museum in Portsmouth www.royalmarinesmuseum.co.uk as they may be able to add details to the circumstances of John Glover's life or death. They have a variety of books, diaries, photographs, and other documents that may help you, and who knows even perhaps something specifically about John Glover himself. The museum is located in the very barracks where your ancestor was probably based so it would be worth a visit for that reason alone. **SW**

Royal Artillery

Q This is a photograph of Stephen Whitehouse, my wife's grandfather. He volunteered to serve in the



The leather bandolier and white lanyard on the left shoulder were commonly worn by all branches of the RA during the war.

Army in the 1914-1918 war and suffered from malaria and died aged 50. I would like to know whether you can tell me what regiment he served in; what rank his uniform indicates; and any other information.

Roy Bratby

roy.bratby@bratbyonline.com

A Stephen is dressed in the standard khaki service uniform that was used by the Army throughout the war. His cap badge shows that he belongs to the Royal Artillery (RA). At this time, the RA badge was worn by three separate corps, the Royal Horse Artillery

(RHA), Royal Field Artillery (RFA) and Royal Garrison Artillery (RGA). Stephen is dressed as a dismounted soldier, usually indicating a member of the RGA (the mounted men of the RHA and RFA were generally equipped with spurs and close-fitting breeches rather than trousers). Stephen has no visible badges of rank, and therefore he appears to be a gunner, the artillery equivalent of a private. **TL**

Chelsea pensions

Q I have recently received interesting correspondence from the Western Front Association that mentions a 'Chelsea Number' and I would like to know what this means.

My father-in-law was only a private in the Army so would not have qualified for the Chelsea Hospital and I know he went back to live in Stepney. Over the years I have seen this annotation many times and thought it referred to Chelsea Pensioners but I now think it must mean something entirely different to that school of thought. I know that my father-in-law was awarded the Silver War Badge (SWB). **Derrick Reynolds**
d.reynolds@sky.com

A At this time, the Royal Hospital Chelsea administered pensions both for 'in pensioners' – the well-known 'Chelsea Pensioners' who were resident at the Hospital – and for 'out pensioners' – the majority of ordinary Army pensioners who received their pensions where they lived. The Chelsea number was an administrative reference that applied to each pensioner in both of these categories.

Army pensions could be awarded for long service or for disability. Being a private was not a barrier to receiving a pension in either

category. The SWB was awarded to men who were honourably discharged from the Army. The most common cause of discharge in these circumstances was being 'no longer physically fit' for service, therefore there is a strong possibility that the holder of a SWB could have been awarded a disability pension. **TL**

Highland laddie

Q In *FT* November 2014 issue, you kindly dated my daguerrotypes of Charles and Elizabeth Ellis. I now have another query concerning a painting believed to represent their son, William Barton Ellis, born in November 1845 in Manchester. I haven't seen the original picture, which is in the United States, so I only have the scans, plus a handwritten note dated May 1924 (see overleaf). Reportedly William is aged three years old, and the note describes how the dog taught him how to walk. If his age is correct, the date would be 1848/9. William's parents were appointed as governor and matron at Ashton Fever Hospital in November 1847: they are recorded there on the 1851 Census, but William wasn't with them – only his two younger brothers. I found William, aged five, 'lodging' in 1851 with Henry and Sarah Machin at Ivy Cottage, Macclesfield, Cheshire. I cannot connect the Machins to the Ellis family and in fact am struggling to find any record of them. However, the picture seems to show a rural location with the plants and flowers and this might make sense as Macclesfield would have been much 'greener' than inner city Manchester or Ashton-under-Lyne. What does look puzzling and a little worrying to me is the dress and hat look quite Scottish!

Denise Psaila

denmar@go.net.mt





A It is lovely to see an original artwork this month, as we have just examined the subject of family paintings and drawings in a special feature (FT December 2015 issue). This simple but charming image appears to be a watercolour painting and its rudimentary execution strongly suggests that it was created by an amateur artist. By the Victorian era, there was a significant vogue for creating watercolour scenes and many females tried their hand at such painting, although naturally such past times were mostly associated with the educated leisured classes.

You mention that tradition strongly links this picture with a particular ancestor and I can confirm that the little figure here is indeed a small boy. He is dressed as an unbreeched male infant in the knee-length frock usual for young sons before they were put into breeches – a rite of passage usually celebrated at about four years of age. The style of his frock, featuring a wide boat neckline, fitted bodice with short sleeves and full skirt is typical of the 1840s or early 1850s, his short stockings or

socks and delicate shoes also characteristic of this period. Therefore I see no reason to query the hypothesis that he is William Barton Ellis, aged three. As you say, William must have been pictured here in late 1848, or probably 1849. Admittedly, it can be hard to tell little girls and boys apart in Victorian portraits but this child has short hair. His appearance also displays the kind of picturesque 'Highland' features then very popular for male infants – here a checked or quasi-tartan dress fabric and a Scottish feathered bonnet. Such fashion details reflect the trend set during the later 1840s and 1850s by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, who loved the Scottish Highlands.

Knowing that William Barton Ellis may not have been living at home when he was painted suggests a plausible context for this picture. I agree that the green mound and extravagant plants depicted here evoke a rural setting, and you feel this could indicate a location near Macclesfield. If so, I believe that the elusive Sarah Machin may have been the artist responsible. Perhaps William was sent to her at Ivy Cottage for health reasons and this

intimate portrayal of him with the dog would have served to record her young charge's development: quite possibly the picture was sent to his parents. **JS**

Hanged at Newgate

Q I think my 4x great-grandfather Russell Farmer (born in 1765 in Harefield, I believe) was hanged outside Newgate prison on 20 May 1795. He stole bank notes to the value of £30 from an envelope he was supposed to stamp while working for the Post Office in London. I have found details at Oldbaileyonline.org (tinyurl.com/pbqtwq4) and Londonlives.org (tinyurl.com/otacbp). Could you tell me a little more about what might have happened to his widow Mary and three children, Russell, Mary Ann and Henry, and whether there would be huge stigma around this for her? Also where did they bury people hanged at Newgate; where I might find more records (newspapers?) and anything else that might help me establish whether or not he is 'mine' and in the process learn a little history? Lastly, I'd like to know whether

condemned prisoners were required to write a will.

E Rothman

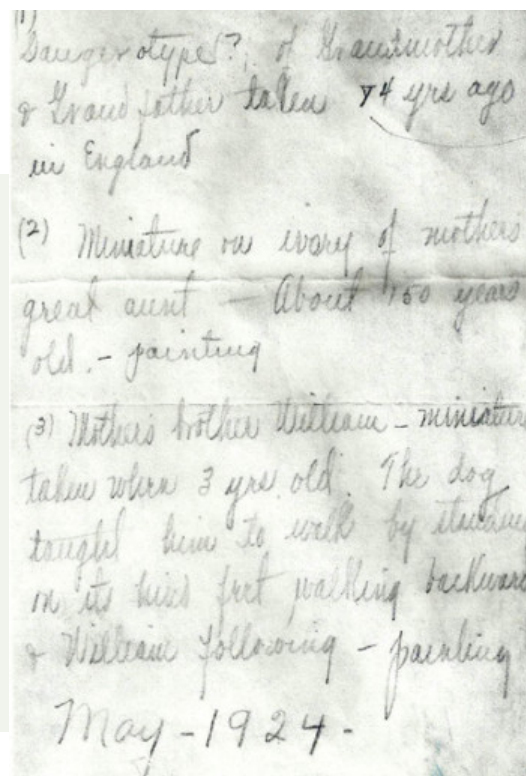
eclairer@aol.com

A The main online newspaper resource is www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk (and also available via findmypast.co.uk).

There are others such as the Gale Digital Collections gdc.gale.com available primarily to libraries rather than to individuals. These tell less information than you got from the Old Bailey Online and LondonLives. (I searched for Russell and also Ruffell – an essential tip for anyone using sources that have been scanned from old typefaces, which used the long letter 's'.) The only nugget I can add is that the *Northampton Mercury* of Saturday 23 May 1795 page 2 said that at the execution Farmer and the other condemned men 'conducted themselves with all due decorum becoming their awful situation'. The truth is that such convictions and executions were so



As explained in Jayne's article (FT December), many girls from genteel families learned basic drawing and painting as part of a classical education and enjoyed capturing domestic and local subjects.



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frequent as scarcely to make the news. However, there are many papers not in the archives I have mentioned. Papers local to the criminal might be a good bet.

The Old Bailey Online records show that Farmer lived in Newington Causeway south of London Bridge, where he kept a shop and apparently employed seven or eight men. This was part of Surrey then. The parish boundaries are tricky but I think this is Southwark, or just possibly Newington. Surrey records should be consulted at the Surrey History Centre. They may also have something about any poor law relief for Farmer's family, as well as more Surrey newspapers.

The next story in the Old Bailey Online about James Pepperdy also sheds light on Farmer. Pepperdy too worked at the Post Office and evidently led Farmer astray.

His guilt seems much more obvious than Farmer's and he also is clearly the leader in the attempt to launder the stolen money through the Huntingdon Bank. With these criminal cases it is often helpful to look at other cases tried at the same time.

To answer the rest of your questions you need to read round the subject. Recent books on Newgate include Stephen Halliday's *Newgate* (Sutton Publishing, 2006), and Kelly Grovier's *The Gaol* (John Murray, 2008). From these I learned that executions at Newgate were relatively recent in 1795; it was only in 1783 that the long procession to execution at Tyburn (near Marble Arch) was discontinued.

Some of those executed at Newgate were buried in quicklime within the prison, though I think this applied only to the more notorious. Some ended up as cadavers

About our experts

Mary Evans has been researching her family tree for more than 30 years, contributed to research on TV series 'Who Do You Think You Are?' and Julian Fellowes' 'Great Houses', and is a regular contributor to *FT* and our forum, where she especially enjoys tackling brickwalls.



Tim Lovering has worked widely as an archivist and historical researcher, and developed an interest in genealogy through his archive work. He has had a lifelong interest in British military history.



Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian, portrait specialist and 'photo detective'. She is photograph consultant for TV series 'Who Do You Think You Are?' and her latest books are *Tracing Your Ancestors Through Family Photographs* and *Fashion in the 1940s* (2014). Find her online at www.jayneshrimpton.co.uk.



David Frost's interest in genealogy was sparked by the unexpected appearance of an illegitimate and distinctly dodgy family member in 1967. He's been writing on genealogy topics since 1991.



for study by medical students at the College of Surgeons and various hospitals. But some had relatives who could buy the body back for decent burial – Grovier records a charge of 14 shillings (70p) for this.

As to making a will, it seems there was no

encouragement to prisoners to do so. I cannot find that Russell Farmer made a will, but there are other Farmers in the Southwark area (eg John Farmer, Hop Factor of Southwark, 1819), whose wills would be worth looking at in TNA (available online, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk). **RM**



Long live the king?

Simon Wills quizzes Ivan Fowler who is part of a research project that suggests Edward II was 'deported' not murdered.

The recent media interest in the life and death of Richard III has helped to focus attention on other medieval English monarchs. Edward II, for example, was an unpopular king with an enduring reputation for weak rule, who was reputedly murdered in Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire, in 1327. However, increasing evidence suggests this conclusion may be unsound. Ivan Fowler is part of a team investigating Edward's fate under the title, The Auramala Project. Auramala is the ancient name of modern day Oramala, a spectacular but remote castle in the Apennines of Pavia in

northern Italy. Here, Edward II may have retreated to live out his life as a recluse, after escaping his enemies in England. The team's website reveals a lot more detail at theauramalaproject.wordpress.com/about, but I caught up with Ivan to ask him some key questions, and to find out if *Family Tree* readers could help.

Q How do you think Edward II might have been 'allowed' to escape?

Ivan: Considerable evidence suggests Edward II actually escaped from Berkeley Castle, first to Corfe Castle in Dorset, and then to Europe, reaching

the Apennines of Pavia in northern Italy. Prison-breaks were not rare in those swashbuckling times. Historians know a group of conspirators broke Edward II out of prison in the months preceding his supposed death, but he was recaptured. The powerful baron Roger Mortimer drugged the guard of the Tower of London and escaped down a rope ladder in 1323.

Alternatively, Edward II's captors themselves may have staged his death and moved him to Corfe to prevent fresh attempts to free him. A group of conspirators – including the Earl of Kent and the Archbishop of York, William Melton – plotted to free Edward II from Corfe Castle in 1330. The Fieschi Letter (see top question on p87) indicates he escaped independently, and travelled disguised as a pilgrim. This was not unusual either. Richard the Lionheart travelled in disguise, for example, just as Edward III passed himself off as a commoner on numerous occasions.



What really happened to Edward II? In this detail, Edward is enthroned, while another figure offers him a crown.



Project team member: Ivan Fowler.



Four generations of the Auramala Project team.



Q Has this theory about the king attracted academic interest, and do you have any documentary evidence to support the concept?

Ivan: In the 1870s a renowned French historian, Alexandre Germain, discovered the Fieschi Letter, the medieval document detailing Edward II's journey across Europe towards the Apennines of Pavia. For more than a century, English historians attempted to dismiss this letter without ever giving an explanation for it that fitted all known facts. Recently, well-known British historian and writer, Ian Mortimer, staked his career on showing that Edward II did not die in Berkeley Castle, and that the Fieschi Letter cannot simply be dismissed out-of-hand. Naturally, he met a great deal of resistance from the academic establishment, but more

and more historians are coming to agree with him, most notably Kathryn Warner in her recent biography *Edward II: The Unconventional King*, who states that he most likely died at the Abbey of Sant'Alberto di Butrio in the Apennines of Pavia. We now know of at least six first-hand sources claiming that Edward II lived, against just one claiming he died. Kathryn Warner's blog sums up this evidence: edwardthesecond.blogspot.it/2007/10/oddities-in-narrative-of-edward-iis.html. Our research team is painstakingly examining thousands of medieval sources in Italy to see if the available evidence confirms or negates the theory. So far, everything we have seen supports the Fieschi Letter.

Q Are there any remains of Edward II that may allow DNA testing?

Ivan: At the Abbey of Sant'Alberto

di Butrio there is a medieval grave that, according to local folklore, is the grave of a fugitive king. Around 1900 it was opened, and a skull fragment found. Royal or 'saintly' skeletons of the time were often broken up by relic hunters or for other reasons. For example, exactly the same part of Charlemagne's skull was separated from the rest of his skeleton and placed in a reliquary in the 1340s. Unfortunately, the bone in question is jumbled together with other medieval bones of the Abbey, so we will have quite a job identifying it, but we have forensic scientists and geneticists in the team, ready to set to work.

Q Are you interested to hear from people who are descended from Edward II?

Ivan: Extremely interested! Craig Foster, a research consultant at FamilySearch's Family History Library in Salt Lake City, Utah, is currently helping us track down descendants. The important thing is that you must be descended from Edward II's mother, Eleanor of Castille, in a direct mother-to-daughter line. This means you will carry the same mitochondrial DNA as Edward II.

● Please contact *Family Tree's* editor Helen Tovey if you think you belong to this line: helen.t@family-tree.co.uk. *FT* can connect you with Ivan's team.



Team member Enrica Biasi researching in Milan State Archive.



Did Edward die at Berkeley Castle or escape from it?

About the author

Dr Simon Wills is a genealogist and author with more than 25 years' experience of researching his ancestors. He has a particular interest in maritime history and his latest book is *Voyages from the Past* (Pen & Sword, 2014). He is also author of *How Our Ancestors Died* and of the historical novel *Lifeboatmen*.



The purported tomb of Edward II at Sant'Alberto di Butrio.





mailbox

Battling with English brickwalls, thoughts of a young genealogy addict, and further views on the pitfalls and value of online trees...

We love reading your letters, and try to publish as many as possible. To contact us, see the various ways at the bottom of page 91.



English brickwalls & Czech success

The *FT* November cover (the silhouetted hands fitting jigsaw pieces together superimposed on the word 'Brickwalls') struck me as very apposite! When you hit a genealogical brickwall, sometimes the only course of action left is to sift through many jigsaw pieces in the hope of picking up the right one. But in England, where each little piece costs £9.25 to see before you're even sure that the piece belongs to the puzzle you're working on, this can be too expensive for most people, so that brickwall remains standing tall.

I am fortunate that one quarter of my ancestry is Scottish so can search for and download unofficial copies of register entries from scotlandspeople.gov.uk at much lower cost and without the wait!

More fortunate still, half of my ancestry is from Nordmähren (Moravia), part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire that is now within the Czech republic.

When I started my research more than 15 years ago I had resigned myself to never getting beyond the oral history from my grandparents, who were forced to move to Germany during the post-World War II expulsion of Sudeten Germans. There were even stories of the Russians having ransacked churches and desecrated tombstones well before the 1938 Munich Agreement.

However, five years ago I discovered the online archives of the Olomouc region of the Czech Republic at vademecum.archives.cz/vademecum/searchlink, a massive collection of church registers, land records and more, much of which has been digitised and is free to view and download!

OK, so there are no searchable indexes and I've had to learn the Czech names of villages (not to mention the archaic German *Kanzleischrift* handwriting) and pore over thousands of faded pages, but that has made the research all the more enjoyable. I estimate that the Czech records I have looked at over the last five

years would have cost me over £40,000 (yes, forty thousand!) to see as official English certificates!

I have now pieced together a very detailed history of all of my Moravian ancestors' families back to the early 1700s. So here's a heart-felt thank you and congratulations to the Czech authorities for setting an example of how to make historical public records truly accessible to the public!

If any would like to look at an abridged version of my family history research, they can find it at myweb.tiscali.co.uk/pgwgart/page.

Paul Geissler
page@bas.ac.uk

Young family history addicts

My mother had been an avid family history researcher since she was a teenager and it had always puzzled to me why she spent hours on the computer, gazing intently at copious documents. It was only when, about five years ago, I found myself – aged 12 – peering over Mum's shoulder that I too got the bug, and it hasn't left me.

When I reflect back onto why my obsession started, I cannot remember. I know that the detective work and challenge appealed, or perhaps it was immersing myself into the lives of my ancestors, reading about the lifestyles of different generations.

There is so much to discover no matter who you are. If you are like me, it could be uncovering an alleged suicide in mid-Wales, marital affairs resulting in illegitimate children and royal connections. Not to mention changes of identity in the Indian military and intrepid women on transatlantic adventures. You name it, I have no doubt got it.

I do often wonder why not many of my generation have realised the joys of family history. It has certainly been one of the most rewarding things in my life to date, and the lack of interest in it by the younger community is something that disappoints me. I do not know anybody else who did

genealogy for their Duke of Edinburgh Award, or who has trekked the Welsh countryside in the rain specifically to find a grave. I do not know anybody who truly knows where they came from. I'd like to encourage people of all ages to find out about the wonder of genealogy, because otherwise they are missing out on the experience of a lifetime.

Megan Harrison

megan.e-harrison@hotmail.com
www.charliiandmegsblog.wordpress.com

Pining for the past

Diane Lindsay's column 'Forgotten Footsteps' (*FT* November) struck a real chord with me. I live just outside of Christchurch, New Zealand, and we had a series of devastating earthquakes in 2010 and 2011. Most of the central city as we know it has changed and we have lost the majority of our old and not-so-old buildings. Venturing into the central city now brings a feeling of not being in my home town. So much has changed I might as well be somewhere else. All the old landmarks have gone and a sense of panic ensues when I realise I have no idea where I am. Gradually new buildings are being built and temporary structures are being replaced. I can sympathise with Diane's sense of being robbed. I can no longer see or go into the buildings that my parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents would have known. My children will never know the city that I once knew. I now have a better appreciation of what it must have been like to be bombed.

Petina Danenberg
tina.dan@xtra.co.nz

Copypat trees

Well done to Noreen Watson for raising the issue regarding the horrors of online trees (*FT* November).

I find it hard to believe that people who are interested in seeking their ancestors, take so little effort in doing any actual research – it would appear that one person enters a tree and everyone else copies it, regardless of whether it is correct. This is pretty obvious as the script on them is word for word. If you try



to contact the contributor it is extremely unlikely you will receive a reply. I have even offered to send them copies of certificates. Friends have informed me that they have sat at their computer and in one evening have found their complete family history, dating back to medieval times. (So far mine has taken 12 years of meticulous research via parish registers complete with documentation and is still ongoing). On the positive side, there are trees that have been correctly sourced from which valuable information can be found, so it's not all bad. But we should all remember than just one error can mean that an entire branch of your family tree is worthless.

Pat Nash

grannynash@btinternet.com

Online trees continued

I too have noticed recently a great deal of incorrect information being repeated ad nauseam online.

I might be wrong but I don't think this was the case five or so years ago

when I was lucky and got in touch, via an online tree, with people in the USA, Australia, India and the UK, who sent me databases, old photos and memoirs and – in two cases – detailed family histories published privately years before, which have all added enormously to my research and been such fun! I have met up with several of the other researchers in person and in some cases visited family-related locations with them. I now have photos of most of my great-grandfather's 11 siblings and was even sent a photo of a sampler made by his wife, my great-grandmother, when aged 11. The most poignant find was a photo sent via a second cousin of my mother's uncle who was killed in France during the first month of the First World War.

Philippa Brooker

philippa.brooker@gmail.com

The pens that ended WW2

Re the *FT* November news story, 'Pen that ended WW2 goes on display', which

specifically refers to the pen that signed the surrender on board the *USS Missouri*. In fact there were no less than five (some accounts even say six) such fountain pens used by MacArthur during the signing ceremony. One of them was gifted by MacArthur to US Lt General Wainwright and another to Lt General Percival of the British Army, both former Japanese prisoners of war.

Graham Caldwell

gljccaldwell@ozemail.com.au

Research in Glasgow

For anyone considering research at the Mitchell Library, I would just like to clarify that while a £15 fee is required to access the Registrar's Genealogy Centre (including the statutory civil registration records from 1855, held in Edinburgh) – now found on Level 5, together with the City Archives Office, and the 'Glasgow Room' – it is possible to search other resources at the Mitchell without incurring any fee at all!

Brian D Henderson

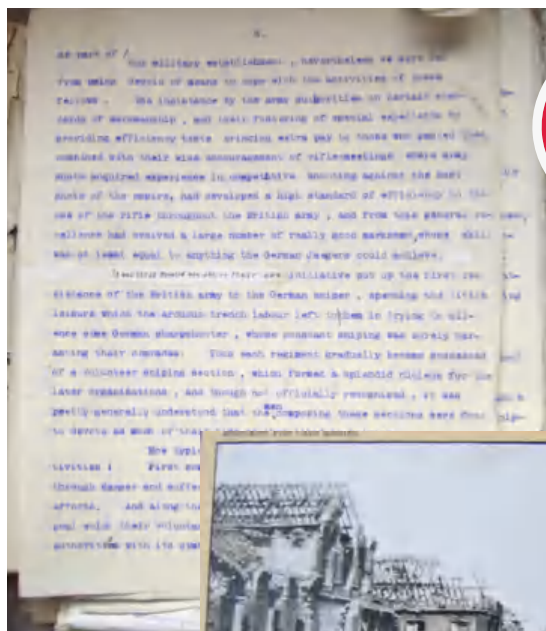
bdh@towersclark.plus.com



Leafing through his WW1 memorabilia, **Keith Gregson** is reminded of a fascinating First World War story.

While rummaging through my collection of First World War postcards I came across the one featured below. It immediately put me in mind of a chilling tale I came across some years ago in a manuscript intended for publication but never published. It had been written by one of the first sniper officers on the Western Front and ended up in the attic of an antique shop in Carlisle. One of the tales the officer told was of a ruined building similar to those featured in the photograph. This building was in neutral territory between the lines and the officer had decided to set up a sniper's nest on the top floor. He and his men sneaked in at night time and prepared 'the nest'. Experience taught them not to take up occupation at once but to leave the completed work and bide their time. On the following day the officer and members of his unit sat in a trench and watched as the nest was systematically destroyed by synchronised machine gun fire from the enemy side. Their caution had been well founded and no lives were lost.

When I published *A Tommy in the Family* in 2014, a descendant of the sniper officer read it and got in touch so I was able to return the manuscript to the officer's family. A truly wonderful piece of memorabilia!



The manuscript found in an antique shop, and the postcard below.



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NETWORK



January issue
Thursday
24 December



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It's Christmas 1939...

As we celebrate the release of the 1939 Register, **Diane Lindsay** pictures her family during the first Christmas of World War II.

My 1939 project is thriving, and is bringing my family history to life almost like a sci-fi hologram. Under close focus I'm realising those I thought of as getting on in years were actually in their prime. Folk who were there but didn't get to grow old, or who lived just into my lifetime, step out of the shadows and become intensely real in this spot-lit fragment of time.

For a start, it's cold, very cold; the coldest winter for 45 years. Frosts and smoggy pea soupers turn to black ice and blizzards and by Christmas much of the country is snowbound. Blacked out, nights seem darker than ever with no street lights, shop windows or public Christmas trees after 5.26pm. Fuel and money is tight, although food isn't yet rationed. Hoarding, frowned upon, means less to buy in the shops. Traffic accidents rise as people fumble their way home from work on foot or bicycle. Off set, there's the crunch of thick snow underfoot and a smell of sulphur rises as from many city chimneys.

Enter my dad, just 19, engaged to my equally youthful mum and, while



There are tears in private

awaiting call-up, marking time working on new houses in the booming pre-war car town of Coventry. He's full of himself, strong, and very handsome. In later years, he will brag about sparring with Dick Turpin, boxer brother of Randolph who both worked on the buildings. (It will take me years to work out what the highwayman did with Black Bess while Dick was running up ladders with a hod full of bricks!)

Change scene: Mum is lodging with Dad's family in their small terraced house, along with his mother and father, two sisters and young brother. Mum is tiny, sassy, and very pretty, with big green eyes and a figure to die for; a real 'Pocket Venus'. Dad shares the big attic with his brother who, at seven, is considered too young to leave his mother for evacuation and Mum shares a bed with my young


aunts. They all huddle up together, teasing and giggling until told in no uncertain terms to shut up and get off to sleep: 'Don't you know there's a war on?'

Next morning: Grandma and Grandad are both 47, he tall and broad with a wrestler's physique, she small and built like a bird; this comes as something of a shock. I've never before quite grasped he was once the same age as my own children are now. Yet here he is, in shirt sleeves and weskit, teasing his cheeky daughters and soon-to-be daughter-in-law with shaving soap froth and threatening them 'Big as you are' with the shaving strop that hangs by the kitchen sink. And yet he must know exactly what horrors lie around the corner. He saw them just over 20 years ago.

They keep up a cheerful front, but there are tears

in private. I remember my friend who seriously contemplated shooting her brother in the foot to keep him home and another who tells of the fear that lay behind the gaiety, not only for the men already in France, but from the terror invasion. The Home Front might hope it will all fizzle out somehow, but my mother's brother has already seen action on the River Plate.

Christmas Day: There's food a-plenty because Grandad keeps chickens and grows vegetables, and Dad has half-inched a small Christmas tree from somewhere. There's a roaring fire in the front and back rooms and small ones in the bedrooms too; Grandad's brother is a coal miner and his best friend a coal man. Shillings from a jar feed the gas lights and there's singing and jollity, and card games and a word or two, rather rude, in defiance of Hitler.

Yes, it feels like watching a play, in which the characters are my own family, so as the curtain falls on another year of fabulous family history, all that's left to do is raise a small glass of port to them, and all our readers and wish you a very happy Christmas. 

About the author

Diane Lindsay discovered her twin passions of family history and English (and her sense of humour) while training as a teacher and bringing up three small children in the 1970s. She's a writer and local and family historian and, although retired, still teaches anything to anyone who will listen.



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
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